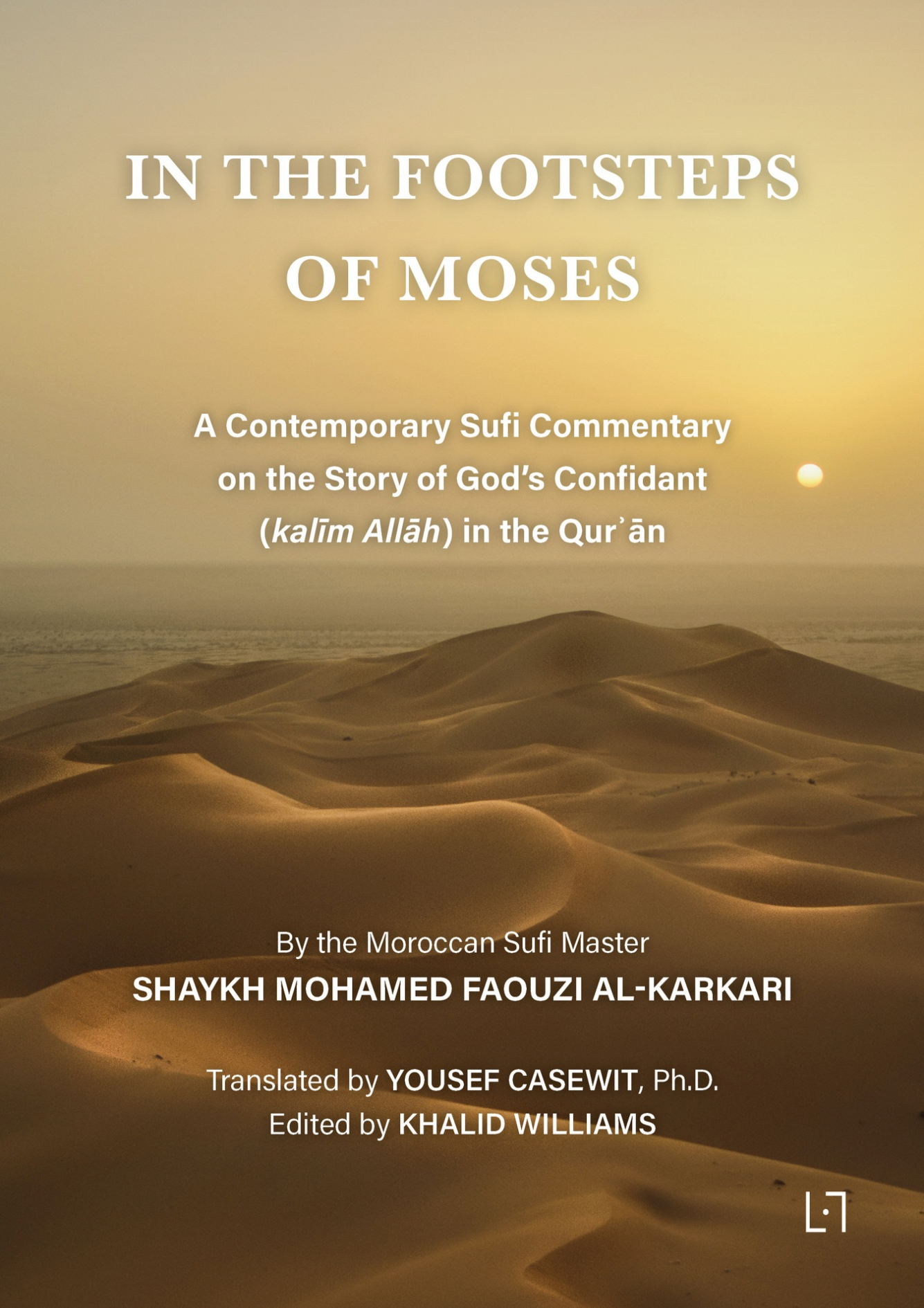
IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MOSES

A Contemporary Sufi Commentary on the Story of God's Confidant (*kalīm Allāh*) in the Qurʾān



By the Moroccan Sufi Master

SHAYKH MOHAMED FAOUZI AL-KARKARI

Translated by **YOUSEF CASEWIT**, Ph.D.

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أعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم

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و لا حول و لا قوة إلا بالله العلي العظيم

Introduction

The journey to God comprises stations where travelers halt, waystations where they dwell, and meadows where devout invokers revel, each in accordance with their preparedness and dedication.[1] For the disparity between the levels of arrival (*wuṣūl*)—though there is no actual arrival—is in accordance with the disparity of saintly aspirations. Moreover, the secrets of proximity upon the carpet of direct witnessing (*shuhūd*) differ according to the different states of the servants.

Since the Path is wild and fraught with peril, there is need for the direction of a Shaykh who has insight into the maladies of the soul, and a firm rooting in the presences of the Holy. This is because deliverance is realized at his hands, and the locks of the unseen are opened through his luminosity, and through his guidance and saintly aspiration the aims and furthest ends are identified. Spiritual objectives are achieved through him, and disciples attain the stations of the passionate lovers through his companionship. This is why God alludes to mustering one's aspiration to follow such Shaykhs in His holy book when He says: **Follow the way of those who turn in repentance unto Me**[2], and when He says: **O you who believe! Reverence your Lord, and be among the truthful**.[3]

Know, may God assist you with His Light, that the divine knowledge that God's folk transmit to one another is dependent upon fruitional experience (*dhawq*) and direct witnessing (*shuhūd*), for it lies beyond the fantasies of the intellects and the stages of delimitation. Given that this is the case, this direct knowledge is not attained by reading books,

but rather is received from its folk when the Shaykh's sun reflects upon the disciple's heart, till the latter's privative earth shines with the Light of its Lord[4]. Whoever wishes to attain direct knowledge of God in any other way is wishing for the impossible. In placing this book between your hands, our goal is to rouse the resolve of those who seek to traverse the stations of certainty, and to describe the Path to those who embark upon the vessel of divine success with spiritual exertion and sincere companionship, and so that the wayfarer may have clarity in this matter, and discernment between what is correct and what is false. This is especially since we speak here of some of the descents of the Hidden *Alif* in the ocean of union (*waṣl*), and how it manifests in the river of separation (*faṣl*), and of the circles of realization that encompass Sainthood (*wilāya*), Prophethood (*nubuwwa*), and Messengerhood (*risāla*), and of the different witnessing-sites between the pulpits of transcendence and immanence, and of the states of souls, and the determination of saintly aspirations and states according to the dictates of the All-Merciful's permission, and other aspects of wayfaring and gnosis that the wayfarers will encounter in their journey.

This book is an experiential meditation upon the life of Sayyidunā Mūsā and Hārūn, peace be upon them, through the first reading of the *Hāʾ* whose circumference encompasses all hidden matters. This book, then, unveils some of the hidden angles of the unseen *Hāʾ*-secrets in the presence of Mūsā and Hārūn.

We ask God to accept this work of ours, and to benefit servants and nations, and to make it a means of ascent through the levels of servanthood, and to unlock the hearts and intellects of everyone who encounters it and reflects upon its contents.

1. The Presence of Divine Mercy (*Ḥadrat al-Raḥamūt*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 4th Jumādā al-Thāniya 1435 / April 4th 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Know, dear seeker of truth, that the presence of our master Hārūn, peace be upon him, like the other presences, is one part of the circle of the lordly presence whose ringstone is the presence of our master the Messenger of God Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh ﷺ. This presence is the presence of entering unto the Singular *Alif* by means of the *Hā*-reading (*al-qirāʾa al-Hāʾiyya*) of the singular Name of God (*al-ism al-mufrad*). This presence, moreover, enables us to begin to experience contact with the Hidden *Alif* (*al-Alif al-muqaddar*), the *Alif* of the divine Name, because it is a presence that brings together Messengerhood (*risāla*) and Prophethood (*nubūwa*), for our master Mūsā is a messenger whereas our master Hārūn is a prophet.

Now the *Alif* is composed of three vertically aligned dots, for it is not possible to draw a straight line with anything other than three dots. Two dots would not be enough to draw the *Alif* straight, because it could become crooked, and then it would no longer be an *Alif* at all. Thus it descends from the presence of pre-eternity (*azal*) to the levels of letter-qualification. These three dots are the dot of Messengerhood (*risāla*), the dot of Prophethood (*nubūwa*), and the dot of Sainthood (*wilāya*).

Know, moreover, that the Hārūn-Presence is full of gnostic sciences and secrets, and replete with mysteries and lights. So listen with your heart in order to follow, and in the hopes that

you may free yourself from the caprice of your evil-enjoining soul, and advance toward the presence of proximity.

You should know, dear esteemed ones, that hearts necessarily follow wealth (*māl*). That is why it is called *māl*, for it causes its possessor to incline (*yamīl*). The Messenger of God ﷺ said: "Verily, every community has its trial, and the trial of my community is wealth."[5] Thus, when the people of Mūsā collected their wealth after crossing the sea in order to get rid of it by casting them into the fire, the Samaritan transformed the gold into a calf that lowed. Whereupon they worshiped it instead of God, because they had rid themselves of their wealth outwardly while clinging to it inwardly. They cast away their wealth with their hands, but their hearts followed after it, and that is why they worshipped it when it became a calf. Each of them sought his share of the calf. To this effect, Jesus, peace be upon him, used to say: "Store your treasures in heaven," that is, store them through righteous deeds so that God may lift them to Him. For when the hearts chase after these treasures, they will find them to be stored with a Powerful Owner (*malīk muqtadir*). Thereupon, they will become attached to Him. That is, they will become attached to the Everlasting, and will abandon the perishing. For the soul is innately disposed to seek what is higher.

Know also that permission (*idhn*) is a ray of divine approval that is reflected upon the mirror of destiny, whether it comes from the Messengers, the Prophets ﷺ, or their heirs. To this effect, when the Samaritan took a handful of dust from the footsteps of the messenger,[6] namely Gabriel,[7] he asked for permission from Sayyidunā Hārūn to cast what he had in his hand. Hārūn, peace be upon him, thought that the Samaritan had gold in his hand, just like the others, and so he gave him permission.[8] When the Samaritan cast it, he intended for the gold to transform into a calf that has

movement and sound, and his intention came to fruition. Now had he not taken permission (*idhn*) from the Prophet ﷺ, the gold would not have turned into a calf. For permission from Prophets and their heirs carries the secret of the formula "in the Name of God" *(bismiLlāh*), and that is why things react to it. It is illuminated by the holy spirit that revives whatever it flows through.

Similarly, knowledge can be a veil from God, for the Samaritan learned knowledge that enabled him to see the footsteps of the messenger and to know its value in that it carries the characteristic of life. He also knew the importance of receiving permission from Prophets. He had knowledge of all of this and more, but he used his knowledge to lead people astray from God's Path. It is to this effect that God's folk say that knowledge is a veil if you halt at it and behold yourself with an eye of self-admiration and pride vis-à-vis God's creatures, or if you employ it in other than God's good pleasure.

A human being cannot be subjugated to another human being by virtue of the spirit that God blew into him. The subjugation of slaves to men is none other than the subjugation of the animality of man, not the humanity of man, because a thing cannot be subjugated to its own kind. Thus, the subjugation of humans to fellow humans is a result of the disparity in their degree. For this reason you must always look at humanity with an eye of elevation, and you must subjugate your soul to the Prophet ﷺ, because he has more rank, elevation, and humanity than you. Thus, Sayyidunā Hārūn was older than Sayyidunā Mūsā yet lower in rank than him, and he used to follow his commands and rule according to his degree.

Now with respect to the singular Name of God, the seeker must journey from the *Hāʾ* of the Name back to the *Alif*,

bearing in mind their differing levels. Entering unto the Singular *Alif* is achieved through the attributes of the saint (*walī*), not through those of the believer (*muʾmin*). Attaching to the elevation (*rifʿa*) of the *Alif* causes the knower of God to taste the reality of servanthood. Likewise, journeying towards the entrance unto the *Alif* with respect to the Hārūn-presence is of two kinds: beholding the resplendent planet (*al-kawkab al-durrī*) as message, and beholding the resplendent planet as prophecy. This is the position of the *Alif*. In a sense, your wayfaring is like a circumambulation (*ṭawāf*) around the *Alif*. This *Alif* is not the *Alif* of the singular Name of God exactly, but represents the descent of the Primordial *Alif* (*al-Alif al-aṣlī*) into the two *Lāms* of the divine name, so that you may read it by virtue of the *Hāʾ*. For the *Lām* is like an *Alif* that is curved at the bottom. Moreover, the *Alif* of the divine name descends into every one of the ninety-nine Most Beautiful Names of God; it appears in the rest of the names as a Hidden *Alif*, so that in this sense each Name has an opening onto the Essence, and an opening onto the Attributes.

You should thus be like a *Lām*, by virtue of the love and annihilation (*fanāʾ*) in the intermediary (*wāsiṭa*), so that your shank intertwines with its,[9] and its Light, secrets and gnostic teachings flow through you the way they flow through the *Lām*.

2. The Calf of Separation (ʿ*Ijl al-faṣl*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 11th Jumādā al-Thāniya 1435 / April 11th 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Concerning the presence of entering upon the Singular *Alif* by means of the *Hā*-reading, and with the attribute of union and separation (*al-faṣl waʾl-waṣl*), majesty and beauty (*al-jamāl waʾl-jalāl*), the Shaykh, may God be pleased with him, said:

Know, may God assist you with His Spirit, that the realities of divine mercy abide in the hearts of the servants of the All-Merciful (ʿ*ibād al-Raḥmān*). These are described by God in the verse: **The servants of the All-Merciful are those who walk humbly upon the earth, and when the ignorant address them, say, "Peace," and who pass the night before their Lord, prostrating and standing [in prayer], and who say, "Our Lord! Avert the punishment of Hell from us! Truly its punishment is inescapable. What an evil dwelling place and station!" and who, when they spend, are neither prodigal nor miserly—and between them is a just mean**.[10] Such realities are seen, heard, and expressed through experiential taste and direct witnessing. These realities, moreover, are for those who possess deep insight and have gone beyond the husk and into the kernel of the heart. Such are the people of divine mercy.

Dear disciples, you should know that no stone or tree is worshiped except that it is venerated (*taʿẓīm*), so let God be the object, source, and purpose of your veneration. For Mūsā's community did not worship the calf except on account of the veneration that was cultivated in their hearts for it. Their hearts were attached to the gold from which the

calf was created, and the source of that is the power of caprice (*hawā*) whose properties flow through all existents. Whenever a worshipper directs his attention toward an object of worship, whether it be true or false, it is by virtue of the overwhelming power of his caprice. The Messenger ﷺ says: “Wretched is the servant of the dinar, the dirham, and the striped silk garment. When he receives something, he is satisfied; but when he does not, he is unsatisfied.”[11]

Thus, when someone worships the calf or any other manifestation-site of human caprice, it is through caprice that he worships it. The greatest affliction that has ever befallen God’s servants is the worship of caprice. The reality of caprice, moreover, is whatever the soul loves passionately. This is a hidden matter that pertains to one’s inner state, but its outward form is worship. Note that God says: **Hast thou considered one who takes his caprice as his god, God having led him astray knowingly?**[12] Note too the saying of His beloved and chosen one ﷺ: “There are three ways to perdition: stinginess that is heeded, caprice that is followed, and pride that arises from some fancied excellence in oneself. And there are three ways to salvation: being just whether one is content or angry, moderation in wealth and in poverty, and fear of God inwardly and outwardly.”[13]

Acquiescing to one’s caprice instead of following knowledge leads to distance from God, because it is a deviation from the Path of the Messengers. As for those whose caprice is in accord with the Messengers, they are as ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, may God be pleased with him, said: “When caprice is in conformity with truth, that is like honey and butter.” Faith is not complete except for the one whose caprice is from the caprice of the Messenger of God ﷺ: “None of you believes until your caprice is in accord with

what I have brought."[14]

Therefore let God be your caprice, and let His Name be your earth and your heaven, until He befriends you, and the illusory forms come to naught before your eyes. For otherwise, when the two angels in the grave address you and say: "Who is your Lord?," your tongue will express that which your caprice was attached to in this life. And when they ask you: "Who is your Prophet?," your tongue will express the attachments that your heart imbibed by way of love of the herebelow, so beware!

When you see that a person is not upright with God, know that there are idols within his heart. So do not let place anyone apart from Him in your heart, and always follow the Law of His Chosen One ﷺ, and know that there are two types of worshippers:

One type worships for the sake of the Garden and out of fear of the Fire. If there were no Garden and no Fire, they would not worship the All-Subjugating. They therefore seek their interest, whose source is caprice, except that it is a praiseworthy caprice that is permitted in the revealed Laws.

Another type worships God for the sake of God, without yearning for the Garden or fleeing from the Fire. They heeded the call of so **flee unto God**.[15] These are the elite among the truthful ones, and they placed their interest in gazing at their Beloved, drawing near to Him, and taking pleasure in intimate converse and knowledge of God.

Dear disciple, you should define your true nature by the one you take as a companion. For a companion is either among those whose very sight reminds you of God, or among those whose very sight reminds you of Satan. So chose your companions carefully. The blessed Messenger ﷺ says:

"The likeness of one who keeps good company and one who keeps bad company is like that of the perfume-seller and

the blacksmith. The least you can expect from the perfume-seller is that you will buy some from him, or you will smell its pleasant fragrance. As for the blacksmith, he will burn your body or your clothes, or you will smell a repugnant smell from him."[16]

Thus, the children of Israel worshiped the Calf because they were companions of the Samaritan, who was the manifestation-site of misguidance in their age. Every age has a calf that is worshipped and a Samaritan who leads God's servants away from the Path of guidance. If their companionship with Sayyidunā Mūsā had been sincere outwardly and inwardly, they would have been among those who were rightly guided, because he, peace be upon him, was a manifestation-site of guidance. Similarly, whoever becomes the companion of a Muḥammadan heir but is not sincere in his companionship outwardly and inwardly, will perish. The disciple's success is thus contingent upon combining both inward and outward companionship. Know also that the secret why Sayyidunā Mūsā's community turned to worshipping specifically the calf instead of God, or why certain people worship certain manifestation-sites generally, is the flow of the property of divine sustenance within them. For possible existents fluctuate between two states: bestowal of existence (*ījād*), and replenishment (*imdād*). Were it not for His bestowal of existence, they would not manifest; and were it not for His replenishment, they would not persist. So understand!

With respect to reality, the possible existents are perishing, as per the verse: **All things are perishing, save His Face**.[17] This is why their turning to them in worship instead of God was a consequence of blameworthy caprice, because worship is only appropriate for God without partner. God says: **The Lord decrees that you worship none but Him, and be**

virtuous to parents.[18] For worship is the ultimate expression of veneration, and it is only worthy of the One who possesses the ultimate extent of reverence and the utmost limit of blessing.

Dear disciple, beware of imagining that the Name has only one level. If that were the case, then the wayfaring of servants would come to an end when the Real unveiled that level to them. However, wayfaring has no end. It begins with passing away in the *Hāʾ* of Identity (*Hāʾ al-huwiyya*), then advancing through the levels of the Name as far as God wills. This is alluded to in the verse: **The Raiser of degrees, the Possessor of the Throne, He casts the Spirit from His Command upon whomsoever He will among His servants to warn of the Day of the Meeting.**[19] He does not speak of one degree, but of multiple degrees, by virtue of the multiplicity of the names within the single entity.

Beware of forgetting the levels within the union itself, lest you violate their rights. For each level demands its right from you, and you should therefore travel within them through the Law of the Chosen One ﷺ so that you are not asked on the Day of Judgment to give them their rightful due.

Whenever a seeker inclines to other-than-God, the eye of his heart becomes blinded. Thus, those who worshiped the calf were previously followers of Mūsā. However, when other-than-God entered into their hearts, it blinded their inner vision. In this way, when the eye of the heart becomes blinded, its traces manifest themselves upon the disciple. You find him disrespecting the gatherings of remembrance, and not honoring the Name with which he entered into the retreat. So be alert, may God have mercy on you.

If you do not honor the Name of *Allāh*, then what divine knowledge can you claim to possess? The Shaykh assists you with the Light and gnosis, and he does not ask you for money

or worldly things in return. Rather, the price that he places on gnosis is etiquette. The price of what you see with your heart is virtue. If your character becomes beautiful, and your traits become refined, then you will retain gnosis and we will give you more. But if you believe that you are a thing remembered, then we will strip it from you.

Just as the Shaykh gives, he also deprives. Just as he plants, he also uproots. Mūlay al-ʿArabī al-Darqāwī, may God be pleased with him, used to express anger when someone stretched out their feet during a gathering. What are we to say, therefore, when someone speaks during the invocation? Have shame before God, because a disciple may be an obstacle on the Path even though he is unaware of it. The masses do not look at the number of secrets on the Path you have, nor how much Light you carry in your hearts. They do not know any of that, nor do they understand what it means. But they do observe your behavior and your character.

Conveying the message, therefore, is not limited to speech alone. Rather, it is divided into various sorts. Some convey with their tongue, others with their spiritual states, and still others with their clarity of expression. Which type are you? If you do not find yourself to be among any of them, then you should fear for yourself lest you be one of those who repel others from God with their tongue or their actions.

I have also taught you to close your eyes during the invocation so that you are not distracted by existents from your intended goal, and so that you may quickly transition from the sensory realm to the supra-sensory realm. So do not open your eyes during the invocation, may God have mercy on you, until you arrive at a stage when the eye of the heart becomes infused with the physical eye, such that opening and closing your eyes are the same for you.

3. The *Lām* of the Intermediary is the Secret of Deliverance (*lām al-wāsiṭa sirr al-najāt*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 18th Jumādā al-Thāniya 1435 / April 18th 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Know, dear servants of God, that the divisions of the heart differ as a result of the different incoming thoughts. Some pertain to darkness, others are luminous. The Beloved ﷺ said: "Temptations will be presented to the heart in the same manner as reed mats are plaited, strip by strip. The heart that imbibes these [temptations] is marked by a black dot, while the heart that rejects them is marked by white dot. Accordingly, there are two types of hearts: one that is as white as a white stone. It is unharmed by temptations for as long as the heavens and the earth remain. The other is dark and dust-colored, like a turbid vessel. It neither recognizes the good, nor rejects the reprehensible. It is only consumed by its passions."[20]

The one who takes his knowledge and his state from the Blessed Tree that is connected to the Messengers has a luminous heart that receives its Light from the disclosures of the names and attributes. Moreover, the Light shines upon his bodily limbs. You observe that such a person does not deviate from the verse: **Say, "If you love God, follow me, and God will love you and forgive you your sins. And God is Forgiving, Merciful."**[21] He is upon the Sunna of the Beloved and constantly follows him. As for the one whose knowledge and spiritual state is cut off from the Tree of Guidance, he possesses a heart of darkness. The traces of

darkness manifest on his limbs, and he turns to other than what the revealed Law commands.

This is why the heart manifests in this Hārūn-Presence in a corporeal body, because of its inclination toward gold. Moreover, since matter is darkness, it takes over the heart and the limbs follow suit, and they prostrate to the calf. For they took their knowledge and spiritual state from the Samaritan, whose connection with the niche of Prophethood was severed. Whoever is severed from the niche of Prophethood becomes attached to a false idol (*ṭāghūt*) without being aware of it. One report has reached us that "whoever has no Shaykh, then Iblīs is his Shaykh." Hence you realize the importance of the Light that is taken from the Blessed Tree, transmitted from Shaykh to Shaykh, back to the wellspring of lights and secrets, Sayyidunā Muḥammad ﷺ. For he is a repudiation from the false idol: **God is the Friend of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the Light. As for those who disbelieve, their friends are the false idols, bringing them out of the Light into the darkness. They are the inhabitants of the Fire, abiding therein**.[22]

Be very cautious, dear wayfarers, because falsehood can manifest itself in the garment of truth, and the one whose inner vision is blind may go astray just as the Samaritan led his people astray. Upon seeing a supernatural event (*khāriqa*), they deemed it to be a miracle (*muʿjiza*). Satan one day appeared to Sayyidunā ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, may God be pleased with him, in the attribute of Light, yet al-Jīlānī recognized him and was saved from his misguidance because he could recognize the difference between the Light that is taken from the Niche and the light that is severed from it. Thus, an authority in the revealed Law is necessary in order to discern between stations and states. For the manifestation

of Light and supernatural events (*khāriqa*) at the hands of the one who does not adhere to the revealed Law is not to be taken into account. Rather, it only makes the servant more distant from God. As for the Light that is received through a continuous chain of transmission, it brings the servant nearer to God, and it invites him to what is good, and to adherence to the Sunna. Moreover, when the servant performs a deed that is contrary to it, then it diminishes, or God may even strip it from him.

The Light that you receive is from the quarry of Prophethood. It teaches you knowledge of the names, and unveils for you the secrets of the attributes, and carries you to the Presence of the Essence, because **God is the Light of the heavens and the earth**.[23] So do not be deluded if non-Muslims should behold a resemblance of the Light, and let it not shake your creed, for it resembles the Light in form but it differs from it in reality and in meaning. It is like the mirage that resembles water from afar, but is contrary to it in reality. For a mirage comes about through the reflection of Light in the layers of the atmosphere during high temperatures. Furthermore, every human being has a Light that is deposited in his heart, regardless of his religious affiliation. That is the Light of innate disposition (*nūr al-fiṭra*) upon which God created mankind. The Messenger of God ﷺ said: "When God created Adam, He touched his back, and every person that He created among his offspring till the Day of Resurrection fell out of his back. Then He placed a ray of Light between the eyes of every person. Then He showed them to Adam, who said: 'Lord, who are these people?' He said: 'They are your offspring.' He saw one of them whose ray between his eyes amazed him, so he said: 'Lord, who is this?' He said: 'This is a man from the latter nations of your offspring called David.' He said: 'Lord, how long did You

make his lifespan?' He said: 'Sixty years.' He said: 'Lord, add forty years from my life to his.' Then at the end of Adam's life, when the angel of death came to him, Adam said: 'Do I not have forty years left?' He replied: 'Did you not give them to your son David?'" The Messenger of God said: "Adam denied, so his offspring denied; and Adam forgot, so his offspring forgot; and Adam sinned, so his offspring sinned."[24]

Since hearts are affected in this manner by what enters into them, there is a variation of the objects of worship in the hearts of worshippers. As a result, disagreement arises among them, and each accuses the other of misguidance. This is the why the Real describes their state on the Day of Resurrection as: **Every time a community enters [the Fire], it curses its sister**.[25] Its sister means its peer in following caprice and idol-worship.

Know, dear esteemed ones, that if the wayfarer were to turn away from the property of the Tree and to look with the eye of union, then he would undoubtedly fall into a state of bewilderment. For the property of annihilation would overwhelm him, and all objects of worship thereupon would pertain to the same genus. He would be like the one who is within the heart of the Kaʿba and does not know where the *qibla* is. Thus, the wayfarer must only pay regard to what was revealed by the Messengers.

It is for this reason that in our Order, if your entrance into the *Hāʾ* is not accompanied by a concentration upon the center of the *Ḥāʾ*, then you will turn away from some names and remain with others. You will then commit a heresy (*ilḥād*) with respect to the names. However, if you passionately focus on the center of the *Hāʾ*, then you will have a share from each part of its circumference, because the rays of union connect the center to each of the dots on the

circle's circumference. As such, the correct manner of entering into the all-encompassing presence is to reach and come to naught in the Secret of the Secret, the center of the *Hāʾ*.

This begins with the cultivation of reverence in the heart. Do you not see that idols were only worshipped because those who worshipped them saw them as manifestation-sites of exaltedness? So be, for your part, among those who are guided by the guidance of the Messengers, and you will see that **Truly exaltation belongs altogether to God; He is the Hearing, the Knowing**.[26] The gnostic sees all creatures as disclosures of the Real, but he does not worship these disclosures which undergo constant change and transformation, and are manifest one moment and gone the next. Rather, it is God, the Self-Sufficient who is unlike anything, that he worships. As for those who worship things because they are disclosures of God, they undergo the same properties that those things undergo, and so they see themselves too as worthy of being worshipped. That is a latent site of error, misguidance, and banishment from the Path of God.

This being the case, the worshippers of idols believe that they only worship them to bring them closer to God. To this effect, God quotes them as saying: **Those who take protectors apart from Him [say], "We do not worship them, save to bring us nigh in nearness unto God"**.[27] That is, they placed the idols at the level of the two *Lāms*, but the revealed Law does not approve of that. For things ought to be placed at the level of the *Hāʾ*, not the two *Lāms*, because to place them at the level of the two *Lāms* means to make them connected, but they are not so.

For the two *Lāms* are the reality of the intermediary. The revealed Law, for its part, affirms a single intermediary.

Thus, whoever does not acknowledge it and does not submit to it, is cut off. For *lā ilāha illā Allāh* (no god but God) does not suffice, and the intermediacy of *Muḥammad rasūl Allāh* is necessary. The testimony of faith is not accepted except by affirming both *lā ilāha illā Allāh* and *Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*.

Moreover, the intermediacy of Shaykhs is from the intermediacy of the Chosen One ﷺ: "The knowers are the heirs of the Prophets. The Prophets bequeath neither dinar nor dirham; they bequeath only knowledge, and whoever takes it takes an abundant portion."[28] Knowledge, moreover, is knowledge of God, His attributes, names, and properties.

Dear loved ones, the Shaykhs of spiritual training (*shuyūkh al-tarbiya*) are deputies of the Chosen One ﷺ in every age. The Path of the two *Lāms*, moreover, is a straight line that is made of three presences: the presence of the name *Allāh*, the presence of the name the Friend (*al-Walī*), and the presence of the name the Faithful (*al-Muʾmin*). The spiritual journey, moreover, is a Path of ascension from the servant who has a share in His name the Faithful, through his complete immersion in the property of the servant who has attained realization of His name the Friend (*al-Walī*), in order to attain knowledge of God by unveiling the secrets of the all-encompassing name *Allāh*. Its sign is to come out from darkness to the Light. This is why God clarifies this wayfaring through the levels of these names by saying: **God is the Friend of those who believe. He brings them out from the darkness to the Light**.[29] In contrast, God says: **Surely God guides not disbelieving people**.[30] Thus, the servant who is deceived by idolatry and unbelief will not attain guidance, and so is distant from God. The most important thing the believer can receive from the intermediary is guidance; and since it is nonexistent for the

unbelievers, God negates guidance from them by saying that He guides them not, and so they wander aimlessly in misguidance.

This is where you recognize the importance of the intermediary whose most perfect manifestation-site is Sayyidunā Muḥammad ﷺ, then his heirs. This is why it is important for the wayfarer to possess high taste in order to discern between manifestation-sites of misguidance that assume the appearance of the forms of guidance, and between the reality of guidance. As for the one who carries the Secret, or the Secret of the Secret, or the Secret's Secret of the Secret, and is inactive, and does not taste scripture and supra-sensory meanings, he is frozen. Thus, taste is a gift from God that benefits the spiritual aspirant if he carries the Secret. The beginning of tasting is acquisition until it becomes a station, then it becomes a bestowal from the Lord.

Consider this example to illustrate the difference between the one who possesses taste in the spiritual Path and the one who does not. Suppose you give two people some honey to taste. To the first you give an entire kilogram of honey. He eats it, and when you ask him about it, he tells you that he ate honey and says no more. Then you give the same quantity to the other, who eats a single spoonful of it. When you ask him about it, he says that he ate honey, and tells you what kind, and the tree that the bee drank from, and its benefits, and so forth. The first has knowledge but does not have high taste, and the second has knowledge as well as taste. This is the case with gnosis.

Moreover, if the beginning of taste is attained by acquisition, then it is necessary to exert effort. The wayfarer is the one who combines taste and action. He tastes the revealed Law’s devotions, its prayers and bowings, and he tastes the Path with its renunciation, piety, and sincerity. You will not taste these stations unless you strive for them with

true action.

4. To Behold the *Hāʾ*, the *Lām* and the *Alif (Minẓār al-Hāʾ waʾl- Lām waʾl-Alif)*

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 25th Jumādā al-Thāniya 1435 / April 25th 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Know, dear servants of God, that the gazes of the gnostics differ with respect to the heart. For each one of them divides their time according to their state and station. There are those who divide it with respect to beholding the days of the year, and so they make it to be three-hundred and sixty-five parts. There are also those who are dominated by a vision of the hours of the day and the night, so they divide it into twenty-four parts. There are also those who divide it into four parts, in keeping with the seasons of the year. These divisions occur by virtue of direct witnessing, not transmitted report. For transmitted report may be sound, in which case the division is sound; or it may be false, in which case the division is false.

What is meant by this consideration of the day, the hour, and the season, are not these three elements in themselves. For no matter how elevated these things of the physical realm are, what they seek are the subtleties of the spiritual realm (*raqāʾiq malakūtiyya*) that manifest in the hearts when the realities of the Prophet's saying: "Do not curse the Aeon, because God is the Aeon"[31] disclose themselves. For behind these vessels lie pure meanings, and whoever halts at perishing things is veiled from the Everlasting.

The wayfarer enters into his heart through the *Hāʾ* of annihilation (*Hāʾ al-fanāʾ*), and retains this perishing schematic division. Thus he attains the *Alif*-gaze of "God was, and there was nothing beside Him,"[32] which occurs

when he beholds the letters, and so he is not veiled by their curvature from witnessing the subtle presence of the *Alif* within them. Thus, those who grasp this meaning proclaim that “He is now as He was then.”

This flowing manifests itself to the one who becomes absent from his body and from other-than-God. However, if you find that a *murid* is still preoccupied with his external appearances after coming out of the retreat (*khalwa*), then that is due to his frozenness and foolishness. The reason for his frozenness is that the heart is absent from the religious intermediary which is replaced by a worldly intermediary, and thus he becomes veiled.

Dear loved ones, the heart necessarily inclines toward whatever dominates it. This is why a tradition has reached us that Jesus said: “Store your treasures in heaven.”[33] Moreover, we have previously seen why the children of Israel were afflicted with the worship of wealth in the form of the calf, because their hearts were attached to it, and so they became lowly. Jesus’ counsel is therefore an instruction in order to rectify your intermediary *Lām*, because investing your wealth in charity and entrusting it to the angels while aspiring for the Garden elevates your saintly aspiration at the very least. Higher still are those who dedicate their charity to God, without asking for a compensation other than the approval and proximity of their Lord. To this effect, it is related that Sayyida ʿĀʾisha and Sayyida Fāṭima said that “A dirham given in charity reaches the Hand of God before it reaches the hand of the poor person.” Thus they used to perfume it before placing it in the hand of the poor. There is therefore a difference between the one who devotes his deeds for the sake of God's Face, and the one who devotes his deeds for the sake of the Garden. So understand!

Beholding the intermediary *Lām* as being an *Alif* is the very

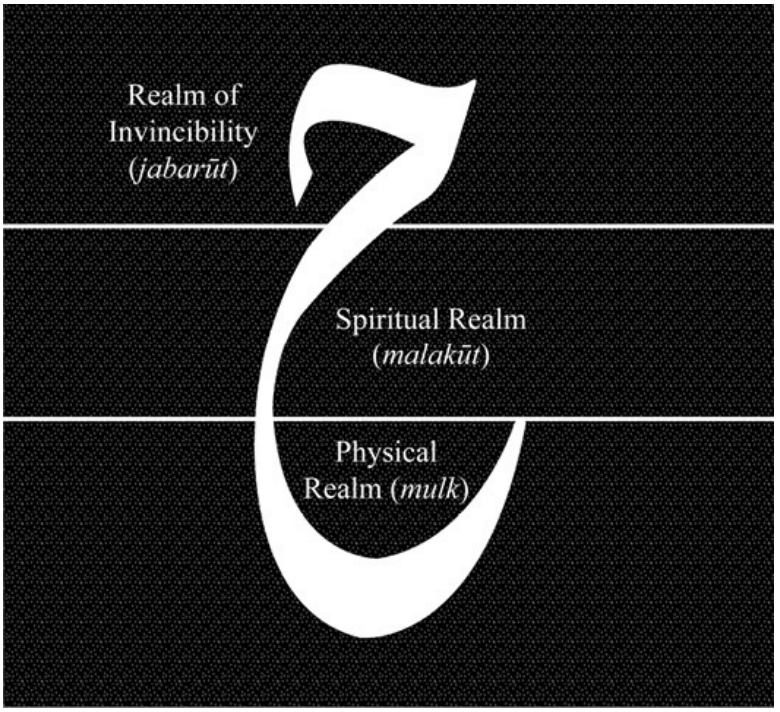
essence of beholding. Such a lordly servant who is singled out by God's words on the tongue of the Prophet ﷺ: "Whosoever aggresses against a friend of Mine, I declare war upon him. My servant cannot draw nearer to Me with anything more beloved to Me than what I have made obligatory upon him. And My servant does not cease drawing near to me through supererogatory devotions until I love him. And when I love him, I become his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks. If he asks Me, I will surely give him; and if he seeks refuge in Me, I will surely grant it to him."[34]

Beware of halting with the human substance. For the one who halts with the nature of mortal man is deprived of the secret of divine election. It is for this reason that people beheld the supreme intermediary, Sayyidunā Muḥammad ﷺ, in different manners. It is for him that God revealed the verse: **A Messenger has indeed come unto you from yourselves.**[35] Thus, it is in accordance with their self-status that they beheld the intermediary, because he is the universal and all-encompassing mirror for every form. As such, the one whose soul commands unto evil (*ammāra*), or is lamenting (*lawwāma*), is dominated by a bodily gaze; whereas the one whose soul is at peace (*muṭmaʾinna*) is dominated by a spiritual gaze; while the one whose soul is perfected witnesses the Muḥammadan perfection, and so combines the bodily and spiritual gazes.

Those who have a bodily gaze remain with corporeal things, and when they speak from their station their words are delimited because they are perishing. As for the spiritual person, his speech is elevated. The angels do not behold it and write it down, nor do the satans corrupt it. For it is from the quarry of the secret of sincerity. Thus, the knower of God

sees all things as a *Hāʾ*, then he ascends and sees all things as a *Lām*, then he ascends and sees all things as an *Alif*. The one who beholds his own heart from the presence of the *Alif*'s touch will find that it curves toward the *Lām*.

The *Alif* is a line that you can extend for as long as you please. That is why it manifests in all the letters, just as the number one manifests in all numbers. The one who gains proximity to the *Alif* observes all letters as *Alif*, but then when he looks again he reads them as *Lām*, and then the third time he reads them as *Hāʾ*. This is specific to the people of direct witnessing (*ahl al-mushāhada*). For example, if the letter *Ḥāʾ* appears to you and you observe it carefully until you trace it back to the treasury of the *Alif*,[36] and you remain with it by virtue of love (*ḥubb*),[37] then afterwards it will seem to you that it has become a *Lām*, and your yearning for it will increase, because the numerical value of *Lām* is seventy, according to the number of veils between the Real and creation. Then you will pierce through them, and you will look at the same letter as being annihilation (*fanāʾ*) with no existence, and at yourself the same way, and you will look at it in the *Hāʾ* of the name. And through this wayfaring you will read *'Ilāh'* (*Alif Lām Hāʾ*). In this manner, when the flowing of the *Alif* in the *Ḥāʾ* manifests to you, you will know its three levels of *jabarūt*, *malakūt* and *mulk*.



No one tastes the sweetness of the intermediary (*wāsiṭa*), or knows the Lām, except the one who becomes 'for God' (*liʾLlāh*)[38] by withdrawing from all things other than God, becoming oblivious to the lower self, and arriving at the soul at peace (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*). At that time, by virtue of the rectitude (*istiqāma*) of the spirit, upon gazing at the *Lām* one sees it as an *Alif* because of the purity of one's gaze, and by virtue of being oblivious to the non-existent forms. As for the one who remains with the forms, he will remain veiled.

Now, when one becomes *liʾLlāh*, one begins to understand why God's folk call it the *Ḥāʾ* of Thronehood (*al-Ḥāʾ al-ʿarshiyya*). One begins to understand why it has the value eight in the science of numerology (*ḥisāb al-jummal*). One understands why God swears by it in His Holy Book seven times, adding to it the Muḥammadan *Mīm*: *Ḥāʾ Mīm*. All of this you realize through direct witnessing; and this discourse is addressed to those who are qualified to hear it. It is in this way that you engage with all the letters: you look at them as a

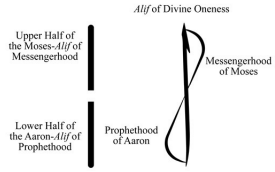
Hāʾ, then as a *Lām*, then as an *Alif*, and then you discover their reality.

Now in the Hārūn-presence, we learn to look at the *Alif*. For it is this presence that puts us into contact with the *Alif*, which is composed of three levels: the level of Messengerhood (*risāla*) at the top, the level of Sainthood (*wilāya*) in the middle, and the level of Prophethood (*nubūwa*) at the bottom.

Sayyidunā Mūsā, peace be upon him, is the Messenger of God (*rasūl Allāh*) to the Israelites, representing the upper dot of the Alif. Our master Hārūn is the Prophet of God and the representative (*khalīfa*) of our master Mūsā to his people, representing the lower dot. There is much proof that our master Hārūn was a prophet and not a messenger, including the verse from Sūra Maryam, **And We granted him from our mercy his brother Hārūn as a Prophet**.[39] And from the Sunna: when the holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ went out to the battle of Tabūk and left ʿAlī behind as his *khalīfa* over the women and the children, ʿAlī, God be pleased with him, told him, "Would you leave me behind with the women and children?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Are you not content to have the station with me that Hārūn had with Mūsā, except that there shall be no prophet after me?"[40] The qualification he made here indicates that our master Hārūn was a prophet. Now, the scholars say that every messenger (*rasūl*) is a prophet (*nabī*), but not every prophet is a messenger. Moreover, every prophet and messenger is a saint (*walī*). That is why every messenger brings together the reality of the *Alif* with all three levels. As for the prophet, only two levels manifest in him: the levels of Sainthood and Prophethood.

It is for this reason that when Sayyidunā Mūsā went for the appointed time with his Lord as the Qurʾān says, **And Mūsā**

arrived at Our appointed time, and his Lord spoke to him,[41] and he left behind with his people Sayyidunā Hārūn, it was as if only half of the *Alif* remained with them. Hārūn's influence over his people was weak, and so they inclined towards gold and the worship of the calf, because they had lost that upper half of the *Alif* of Messengerhood, namely our master Mūsā. Then they lost the prophetic half of the *Alif* when they refused to listen to Hārūn when he forbade them from worshipping the golden calf. Thus their hearts drank from the passions of the love of the lower world (*dunyā*).


Alif of Divine Oneness
Upper Half of the Moses-*Alif* of Messengerhood
Messengerhood of Moses
Lower Half of the Aaron-*Alif* of Prophethood
Prophethood of Aaron

But when Mūsā returned and reconnected the upper part of the *Alif* with the lower part, he took hold of the beard of his brother, as the verse says, **How evil is the course you have followed after me! Would you hasten the command of your Lord? And he cast down the tablets and seized his brother by the head, dragging him toward himself**.[42] All of this was symbolic, not literal. And then by God's leave, he scattered the ashes of the calf in the sea and showed them the way of guidance, and said, **Your god is only Allah, except for whom there is no god. He encompasses all things in knowledge**.[43] Thus, wherever the *Alif* manifests and dwells, there manifests guidance and rectitude. This is why the Messenger of God, in the *Sīra*, drew a line in front of him in the sand and said, "This is God's way."[44] The line he drew was toward the very essence of the human being, and towards nothing else; so understand that.

Thus, the return through these letters to the treasury of the *Alif* brings you to the level of servanthood and realization of

servanthood, to constant humility before the exaltation of the Lord; because when one returns to the treasury of the *Alif*, what manifests then is the innermost secret of the words ‘through Me’ (*bī*)[45] in the tradition, ‘through Me they came to know Me’ (*fa-bī ʿarafūnī*).[46] The numerical value of *Bāʾ* is two, and *Yāʾ* is ten, so the total is twelve, which is the number of letters in *lā ilāha illā Allāh*. And *lā ilāha illā Allāh* brings together affirmation and negation (*al-nafy waʾl-ithbāt*) or you might say, annihilation (*fanāʾ*) and subsistence (*baqāʾ*).

So the line of the straight *Alif* is the line of journeying through the levels and ascents of *lā ilāha illā Allāh, Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*, through the inclining of the heart toward it, and its attachment to it, until it achieves realization of it. This is why it is important for you to closely observe the inclinations of your heart: towards whom, and where, and what does it desire? The way to recognize the inclination of your heart is very easy: all you have to do is sit in a room by yourself in the last third of the night, and to place a mirror in front of you, and to talk to it with all sincerity about your deeds, your aspirations and desires, and ask it, “Do you want God, or do you want other than God?” This is the meaning of “asking the heart’s opinion,” about which the Prophet ﷺ said, “Ask your heart’s opinion” (*istafti qalbak*).[47] For when the heart inclines toward something, it abases itself to it and is submissive to it. If you want to know your worth with God, you must simply discover God’s worth in your heart. You will then know the reason why the unbelievers worshipped idols instead of God, because their hearts inclined to them with love and submissiveness, and they believed in their excellence and superiority. This is why their hearts were unreceptive of the Lights of guidance, as God describes them: **verily, God does not guide the unbelieving people**,[48]

because guidance does not dwell in the heart until other-than-God abates and becomes erased from it. It is in the measure of the heart's emptiness from other-than-God that guidance dwells in it and becomes settled in it.

Thus, the unbelievers worship existents, though they know that what they worship neither benefits nor harms them. That is why if you ask them to name their gods, they will tell you that this is a rock, a cow, a tree, or something of that sort. After all, they are aware of what they are worshipping, and that is why they wander aimlessly in the ocean of misguidance. Yet they ascribe partners unto God. **Say, name them!**,[49] and so they ascribed names of existent things to them. This is why God recounts that [after smashing the idols] Sayyidunā Ibrāhīm said [to his people]: **So question them [the idols], if they speak!**[50] to which his people responded: **Certainly you know that these speak not!**[51] He thereby defeated them and invalidated their falsehood, and it became clear that they were well aware of what they worshipped. This is why God did not guide them. After all, they had an intellect with which to discern, but they nonetheless followed caprice and inclined toward lowliness.

So beware of your whims and passions and ensure that your hearts are attached to the two *Lāms*: the *Lām* of Gnosis (*lām al-maʿrifa*) which is the first *Lām* of the divine name, and the *Lām* of Constriction (*lām al-qabḍ*) which is the second *Lām* of the divine name. For it is in the measure of your inclination towards the intermediary (*wāsiṭa*), and in the measure of your love and veneration of it, that you pierce through the seventy veils which stand between you and the Real, in order to arrive at knowledge of God.

Know also that what prevents you from honoring the intermediary (*wāsiṭa*) are your lower selves, which incline toward leadership and prestige, or imagine themselves to

have knowledge, gnosis and proximity to God. Your halting with those imaginations, without referring back to their root and witnessing God's gratuitous kindness upon you, is what prevents you from venerating the intermediary. Be aware, then, that whenever something weighs heavily on your soul, it points directly to a deficiency within you.

Drive your lower selves toward the *Lām*, and all other things will come to you; knowledge of the soul is the root of knowledge. "Whoever knows their soul, knows their Lord." If you want training (*tarbiya*), then first go against yourself, then strive against it until it becomes at peace, then accompany it to the Presence of God. The people of God have established foundational principles that will help you find the treasure that is buried within you. They established the wearing of the patched cloak, of begging in the markets, and of hanging the rosary around the neck, so that you have no interest in what anyone thinks of you, but only what God thinks of you.

Practicing these foundational principles frees you from the shackles of your lower self so that you gain non-qualification and non-delimitation (*iṭlāq*). If someone is unable to wear the patched cloak or place a rosary around his neck, how can he wander in the wilderness, or walk barefoot in the markets calling out to his Lord? How can he sleep among graves, and so experience the slumber of the grave before he dies? So prepare for that night which has no Light, and no one to give you comfort, and adorn your days with beautiful and righteous deeds so that it manifests itself to you in the form of a human being of pleasant appearance in the grave, to give you comfort and make you forget what you left behind in the herebelow.

When you strive against your lower self, the reality of this world becomes evident to you, you know that it is non-existent, that it has no existence except through God. Then

God provides you with Light, and through that Light you come to know how close He is to you. When you behold this Light, you are beholding it through the eye of your inner vision; you are beholding the Real. You are not beholding God, but you are beholding the likeness of His exalted attributes (*mathal ṣifatih*). As for God Himself, **Visions do not perceive Him** (*lā tudrikuhu al-abṣār*).[52] And when you describe this Light, you are describing the Glass Container (*zujāja*) in which that Light manifests. As for the Light itself, it has no color and you have no ability to describe it.

The spirit is subtle, and it sees subtle things that flow. As for the body, it is constrained and sees nothing but density. That is why in visions (*mushāhada*) you see your spirit in the form of your body. You behold the gardens and the fires with the eye of your heart. You behold *mathal nūrihi*, the likeness of His Light, and recognize His nearness. As for He Himself (*Huwa*), the incapacity to perceive Him is a perception. If you are incapable of describing the *Alif*, what about the One who brought the *Alif* into existence?

Lights and disclosures benefit the servant whose intellect is not constrained, and that is why they can become a veil if one halts with them. As for the one who tastes the secret of the Light and pierces through the walls, there is no veil on him.

5. The Appearance of the Hidden *Alif*: The Birth of Sayyidunā Mūsā

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 2nd Rajab 1435 / May 2nd 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Dear servants of God, the Mūsā-Presence comes after the Hārūn-Presence because Sayyidunā Hārūn, peace be upon him, preceded Sayyidunā Mūsā in physical manifestation. That is, he was born before his brother in the year in which infants were spared, and that is why we begin with his presence before the presence of Sayyidunā Mūsā. Our Beloved Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ said, "The eldest brother is like a father."[53]

Thus, Sayyidunā Hārūn is the first in physical and bodily terms. However, the status of Sayyidunā Mūsā is higher and greater because his Prophethood is greater than the Prophethood of Sayyidunā Hārūn. That is why the Mūsā-Presence comes directly after the Hārūn-Presence. Moreover, we are learning to read the contact with the *Alif*, which particularly suits the Mūsā-Presence because it is the presence of the manifestation of the Hidden *Alif* in a complete manner, to the extent that Sayyidunā Mūsā carried it as a staff in the sensory realm.

Dear seekers of the most holy presence, you should know that the determination of the *Alif* begins from the presence of the name the All-Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*), then descends into the rest of the divine names. As for the Original *Alif*, no one has the ability to speak of it. That is why we say that that staff of Mūsā is the Hidden *Alif* in the name *al-Raḥmān* (الرحمن). God says: **And We bestowed upon him, from Our**

mercy, his brother, Hārūn, a prophet.[54] He was thus a Hidden *Alif* for the letters of Mūsā, and that is why this presence is characterized by exaltedness and elevation, and was marked by a tremendous beginning. According to Ibn ʿAbbās, as well as Murra b. Masʿūd, God be pleased with him:

"The Pharaoh dreamt that a fire came from Jerusalem and burnt the houses of Egypt and the Copts, but did not harm the Isrealites. After having this dream, Pharaoh woke up terrified, and sent for all the soothsayers, wise men, and sorcerers and asked them about it. They said 'A child will be born among them, and at his hands the people of Egypt will be destroyed, and your kingdom overthrown. The time of his birth is nigh. That is why Pharaoh the tyrant—may God curse him—ordered all newborns killed and their mothers spared. He used to kill male infants one year, and spare them the next. Sayyidunā Hārūn, peace be upon him, was born the year they were spared, while Sayyidunā Mūsā was born the year they were killed. The sorcerers had determined the year of the prophecised child's birth, and in the year of Mūsā's birth they killed a thousand newborns."

This entire chain of events occurred for the sake of the appearance of the *Alif* of Mūsā. The annihilated silent vowel (*sukūn al-fanāʾ*) of Alf, "one thousand," became the short vowel "i" of *Alif*, in order for the rectitude of the *Alif* to manifest. Moreover, the short vowel "i" which is written under the letter is an abasement, and abasement is from the presence of majesty, and that is why the short vowel manifested in the form of killing.

The notion of killing newborns that Pharaoh and the soothsayers came up with was none other than an expression of the darkness of their souls. The thoughts that are produced by the darkness of the lower self must be assessed against the

Book and the Sunna, so that the one who has them may avoid error and its consequences. As for the thoughts that are derived from a luminous heart upon the carpet of direct witnessing, they are protected from selfish interests and satanic insinuations. After all, the lower self and Satan are darkness, while the Light disperses this darkness and burns it up. Our Beloved Prophet ﷺ said:

"God sets forth a parable of a straight Path, on the sides of which are walls, with open doors, and with curtains suspended over them. At the end of the Path there is a caller who says: 'O mankind, enter upon the Path together, and do not deviate from it.' There is another caller at the other end of the Path who calls out whenever someone tries to open one of those doors: 'Woe to you! Do not open it, for if you open it you will go through it.' The Path is Islam, the two walls are the limits that God has set down, the open doors are the things that God has forbidden, the caller at the top of the Path is God's Book, and the one at the other end of the Path is the divine admonisher within the heart of every Muslim."[55]

This being the case, a thought that derives from Light or from the people of Light never falls outside the Law, while the thoughts that emerged from Pharaoh were dark because he took his replenishment from darkness. Still, the matter is not devoid of the wisdom and determination of the All-Aware, the All-Wise. For if God had not seized the souls of those children then the other spirits would have vied with the spirit of Mūsā. They would have competed in God's affair, and laid claim to what Mūsā claimed. Indeed, the chroniclers tell us that this is just what happened, and that before Mūsā's birth fifty individuals among the children of Israel claimed to be the promised child and to be prophets.

The children who were killed all died in a pure primordial state, and were not defiled by selfish interests and lowly

appetites. God says: **The primordial nature from God upon which He originated mankind**.[56] In the pristine Sunna, it is related that the Messenger of God ﷺ said: "Every child is born in a primordial state, and it is their parents who raise them to be Jews, Christians, or Zoroastrians."[57]

Every child is born in a primordial state of proximity to the covenant of its Lord, still having realization of the secrets of the Day of Alastu, when mankind proclaimed: **"Indeed, You are our Lord"** (*balā*). However, as the child grows up it becomes affected by its surroundings and the people who are closest to it. It becomes like them, and from them learns heedlessness and distance. Therefore, even if you are born into a Muslim family and raised in Islam, it behooves you to verify your Islam and to attain conviction of what your family passed onto you by custom. Ask yourself: are you upon the way of the Chosen One ﷺ? Search for your true self. Learn to lower yourself and to perform the night vigil. Search for the realities of faith, and if you do not find mystical ecstasy, then generate its initial stirs (*in lam tajid fa-tawājad*). Feign the craft of spirituality until you become a craftsman.

Esteemed disciples, the Pharaoh's killing of the children in their primordial state—pure spirit—was to strengthen the spirit of the Confidant, to elevate his status, and to exalt him. How many spirits were ransomed for the spirit of the Confidant? For they killed those children on the basis that they were Mūsā. It is as though they were killing the lower levels in order for the spirit to manifest in its higher levels. They were killing the forms for the sake of the spirit. They were driving the letters, as it were, back to the true *Alif* that would disclose itself at that time without their awareness. That is why Mūsā, peace be upon him, was strong in body,

strong in spirit, and strong in saintly aspiration. God thus chose him to face Pharaoh, who was violent, tyrannical, and obstinate.

6. The *Alif* and the Splitting of the Sea (*al-Alif wa-shaqq al-baḥr*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 9th Rajab 1435 / May 9th 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

We have previously mentioned that the Hārūn-presence and the beginning of the Mūsā-presence represent the completion of contact with the *Alif*, because they bring together Messengerhood, Prophethood, and Sainthood. We know, moreover, that the prophet's sainthood is vaster than his own prophethood. Both the Messenger and the Prophet have a greater and grander station of Sainthood than of Messengerhood and Prophethood, because the properties of Messengerhood and Prophethood come to an end when this world comes to an end. After all, rulings are tied to religious accountability. Consider how a child is not religiously accountable, and therefore the ritual rulings of the Law do not apply to him. As for Sainthood, its property flows in this world and the next. All of this applies to the prophet and messenger in particular. As for saints who are not prophets or messengers, their Sainthood is lesser, for there is no comparison between a messenger-saint and a saint.

Know, dear servants of God, that the staff of Mūsā is the disclosure-site of the Hidden *Alif* in respect of the name the All-Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*). This is why is has been reported that al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ said: "If Mūsā were alive among you, he would have no choice but to follow me."[58] For Mūsā was a Hidden *Alif*, and when the Primordial *Alif* manifests, everything else must become nonmanifest, according to the principle of subordination and the return of the branch to the

root.

This manifestation of Mūsā occurred through the collective force of all the souls that were sacrificed for him. Mūsā was thus the rest of the letters, and his staff was the Hidden *Alif* because of the plurality of letters and names that were slain for his sake. Thus he comprised all the letters, spirits, and numbers; and the letters, as it were, returned to their root. This is why he would strike the other letters with his *Alif*-staff, including the rocks and the sea, so that they no longer possessed existence, and he absorbed whatever he wished from them back into the *Alif*, and discarded whatever he wished. So it was that God's wisdom, will, and power were made manifest in things.

Observe, may God have mercy on you, how he struck the middle of the ocean in order for it to split and the dry land to appear. He struck the middle-letter of the word *b-ḥ-r*, sea, thus absorbing the *ḥā'* back to the *Alif*, and causing it to disappear from that word, and so it became *b-r*, dry land. God's power and wisdom thus became manifest. **Then We revealed unto Moses, "Strike the sea with thy staff!" and it parted, and each part was as a great mountain.**[59]

The secret of the control that he exercised over things goes back to the fact that God's Confidant, peace be upon him, brought together the letters of the slain children within himself. They were in a pure primordial state, endowed with a power of spirit. Through them, the hadith of the saint was realized. As the beloved ﷺ related on behalf of his Lord:

"Whosoever aggresses against a friend of Mine, I declare war upon him. My servant cannot draw nearer to Me with anything more beloved to Me than what I have made obligatory upon him. And My servant does not cease drawing near to me through supererogatory devotions until I love him. And when I love him, I become his hearing with which he

hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks. If he asks Me, I will surely give him; and if he seeks refuge in Me, I will surely grant it to him."[60]

It was due to their proximity to the Real that they attained this existential realization. All of that was inherited by Mūsā, such that all those powers were brought together in him. The power of seeing is the essence of seeing, and the power of hearing is the essence of hearing, and the power to grasp is the essence of the hand, and so on. Thus, he exercised control over others because he brought together what was dispersed in others. Moreover, since children have this special property, you may observe how they exercise control and influence over those who surpass them in age, status, and knowledge. You thus find an elderly man pandering to a small child, playing with him in order to bring joy to him. All of this is the child's subjugation of the adult unconsciously.

This is what happened to Pharaoh with Sayyidunā Mūsā, and that is all on account of the powerful station of the child because of his closeness to God, to say nothing of Sayyidunā Mūsā, whom God appointed as one of the messengers of resolution (*ūlū al-ʿazm*), and for whom God revealed the verse: **And I cast upon thee a love from Me, that thou mightest be formed under My eye**.[61]

Thus, the one who is closest to God is given power over the one who is furthest from God. The closer you are to al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ in spirit and body, the closer you are to God. Nothing, moreover, is closer to the covenant of its Lord than the Light of the Prophet ﷺ. Thus a traditional report tells us that God said: "I took a handful of My Light and said: be Muḥammad." So seek access to him with your hearts, may God have mercy on you, so that there may be proximity and love between you and the Real. Honor the Light more and

more until its covering is removed for you. The one who is replenished from the Light of al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ receives replenishment that is newly arrived from the covenant of its Lord. The Beloved ﷺ teaches us to seek access to whatever is close to God and newly arrived from its Lord, for he says: “Verily, there are spiritual breezes (*nafaḥāt*) that your Lord has placed throughout the days of your lives. So expose yourselves to them in the hopes of one of them reaching you, that you may never be miserable thereafter.”[62] Thus he ﷺ used to expose his body to the rain. It is related that Anas said: “Rain fell upon us while we were with God's Messenger ﷺ. He opened his garment till some of the rain fell upon him. We said: ‘O Messenger of God, why did you do that?’ He replied, ‘It is newly arrived from its Lord.’”[63] When these bestowals of true knowledge appear from the world of the divine command in the manifestation-sites of creation, they emerge bearing the robe of divine proximity. Whoever welcomes them will be increased in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom concerning the disclosures of the Real.

Moreover, it is in this sense the Prophet ﷺ used to behold milk as being knowledge, and that is why he used to interact with it in a special manner. He ﷺ said: “Whoever is given by God food should say: ‘Dear God, bless us through it and provide us with better than it.’ And whomever God has given milk to drink should say: ‘Dear God, bless us through it and give us more of it.’”[64] For milk too is newly arrived from its Lord. Observe how God makes this manifest to us when He says: **And surely in the cattle there is a lesson for you: We give you to drink from that which is in their bellies, between refuse and blood, as pure milk, palatable to those who drink.**[65] He exposed himself, as it were, to

God’s replenishment through milk because of its color. For it is like a birth, and an increase of colors, even though white itself is not a color, but rather it is through it that the other colors manifest. As for water, it has no color. Moreover, he ﷺ used to expose the crown of his head to the sky in order to welcome the replenishment that it brings down with it. To this effect, God says: **We sent down from the sky blessed water**.[66] For he ﷺ is a perfect spirit, or rather he is the spirit of existence. He had such intimate knowledge of his Lord that he would welcome the Real's disclosures and replenishment in whatever He manifested and made apparent. With respect to the *Alif*, he ﷺ received his replenishment from the Dot-Treasure (*nuqṭat al-kanziyya*). That is why the closer the letters are to the *Alif*, the stronger it flows through them. So understand!

This is why you must protect the purity of the innate disposition in your children, so that they may remain in the state of wholesomeness upon which they were created. Do not corrupt it by creating distance between them and the teachings and rulings of religion. You should preserve the state in which they were created with three things:

First, choose a righteous mother for them. For as the Prophet ﷺ says: “Choose a pious woman, may God bless you!”[67] Likewise, the wife’s family should select a man of piety and virtue, for the Prophet ﷺ says: “When someone comes to you with piety and virtue that you approve of, marry him off. If you do not, there will be tribulations on earth and great corruption.”[68] For men of piety and virtue anchor in their children the innate disposition upon which they were born.

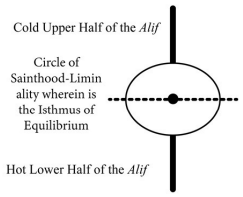
Second, choose the most beautiful names for them. The Messenger of God ﷺ said: “On the Day of Resurrection

you shall be called by your names and the names of your children, so choose beautiful names."[69] When a name has a beautiful meaning, it gives the child confidence and inspires in him positive feelings in front of his peers.

Third, teach them some Qurʾān, for Jābir b. Zayd said: "It has reached me that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, 'Teach your children the Qurʾān, for it is the first of God's knowledge that should be learned.'"[70]

These three general rules will, God willing, preserve the subtle divine grace that flows through each child. For the closer a person is to the innate human disposition, the more eager he is to authenticate the reality of his religious practice at the three levels of submission (*islām*), faith (*īmān*), and spiritual excellence (*iḥsān*). The tree of innate disposition, moreover, is nourished by the water of revelation, the Book and the Sunnah, and extraneous thorns are kept from it with the fire of purification.

This week we have brought down a vision of the *Alif* into the heart of one of the *fuqarāʾ*, whereby the human being is divided into two parts. In this vision, the faqīr ʿAbd al-Qādir witnessed the disclosure of an *Alif* turning around a circle—that is, the *Alif* rules over the circle—and the luminous circle appears, as it were, in the center of the circle as illustrated in the following diagram:


Cold Upper Half of the *Alif*
Circle of Sainthood-Liminality wherein is the Isthmus of Equilibrium
Hot Lower Half of the *Alif*

"I saw as if there was a fire in the lower part of the circle that burnt my lower half, while the upper part was extremely cold. Then I called out to the Shaykh's presence for help and he saved me, for I was inside the circle, and the Seal has the right to come out of the *Hāʾ* of Identity and return to it. For

entering only occurs through the door of sanctity, because it possesses the isthmus-quality.” End of the faqīr’s words.

This is why a staff is held at the middle, so that you are not burnt by Prophethood or Messengerhood. Entering into the *Alif* through the isthmus of Sainthood grants you balance and equilibrium with respect to the exoteric and esoteric, the outward and the inward.

With regard to spiritual advancement, wayfaring does not begin from the *Alif*. Rather, it begins from the *Hāʾ* of Identity which the servant enters into with lowliness, self-abasement, worship, and love until he reaches the Dot-Treasure. Even if the disciple just remains patiently in the *Hāʾ* of Identity, ninety-nine Hidden *Alifs* will become unveiled for him, and the diversity of the Hidden *Alifs* will appear to him from one name to another in their shape and energy. Abundant knowledge and gnostic sciences of the divine names will appear to him.

7. Knowledge of Opposites (*ʿilm al-aḍdād*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 16th Rajab 1435 / May 16th 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

The Mūsā-presence is the presence of entering into contact with the *Alif* inasmuch as it is the disclosure-site of the Hidden *Alif* that exerts influence over the other letters through its descent and assumption of shapes in order to extinguish otherness. Therefore, this presence brings together the disclosures of opposites. Mūsā's mother fears that her son will perish and is commanded to cast him into the perilous ocean; Pharaoh goes on a killing spree and raises the very boy who would be the cause of his demise inside his palace; Mūsā seeks the fire and through it the All-Compelling addresses him, and the fire becomes Light, and so on.

Know, dear wayfarer, that the knowledge of opposites leads you to knowledge of the names, and knowledge of the names drives you to the earth of realization of the Adamic vicegerency: **I am placing upon the earth a vicegerent**[71] upon the disclosure-carpet of **He taught Adam the names**.[72] God be glorified and exalted: He is the All-Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*) and the All-Subjugating (*al-Qahhār*); the Benefiter (*al-Nāfiʿ*) and the Harmer (*al-Ḍārr*); the Withholder (*al-Māniʿ*) and the Bestower (*al-Muʿṭī*); the Constrictor (*al-Qābiḍ*) and the Expander (*al-Bāsiṭ*); and so on. This is why the knowledge of opposites is among the noblest sciences of Sainthood, and the saints surpass each other according to their degree knowledge of this science; and that is why the one who brings them together is the Imām of his age and the

Adam of his time. The saints used to praise the one who realized this science. To this effect, Shaykh Sīdī ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Dabbāgh used to say: "Sīdī ʿAlī [al-Jamal] was a prominent jurist, and a renowned knower of the science of opposites," by which he meant the esoteric truth (*ḥaqīqa*) and exoteric law (*sharīʿa*), freedom and servanthood, union and separation, intoxication and sobriety, wayfaring and attraction, annihilation and subsistence, and the like. Alluding to this Muḥammadan drinking place and Adamic witnessing-site, I wrote:

I am the meeting of the two oceans
The isthmus of pre-eternity
I wore every color
Thereby becoming colorless
I have no name, no place
A uniter of opposites
My body is the manifestation-site of my attributes
A veil to the eye

Moreover, since the Mūsā-presence has this specific characteristic, its manifestation from the womb of Sainthood begins with a revealed inspiration: **When We revealed to thy mother that which was revealed**.[73] For the mother of Mūsā was not a Prophetess, but a righteous woman, and so that inrush came to her from the All-Merciful so that she may manifest God's wisdom and desire with respect to Moses. God says in His Holy Book: **When We revealed to thy mother that which was revealed: "Cast him into the ark and cast it into the sea. Then the sea will throw him upon the bank. An enemy unto Me and an enemy unto him shall take him." And I cast upon thee a love from Me, that thou might be formed under My eye.**[74] Mūsā's mother was unable to resist the assault of the inrush. She hastened to

carry out what was commanded of her, placing her beloved child in the ark that she built, and casting him into the sea. This was in order to manifest the subtle luminous realities that connect the all-encompassing Muḥammadan presence and the Mūsā-presence. For the presences of the Prophets consist of descents of the Muḥammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*) and its assumption of various colors depending on their receptivities and receptacles.

We mentioned earlier how the Prophet ﷺ would expose his body to rain in order to seek replenishment from the disclosures of the name the Living (*al-Ḥayy*). He would uncover his head in order to welcome the divine attribute of Life from the realm of invincibility. Concerning water, God says: **We made every living thing from water**.[75] The Living in reality is God: **He is the Living, there is no god but He**.[76] As for the life that flows through things in the realm of possibility, it is metaphorical, bereft, and perishing, as per the verse: **All things are perishing, save His Face**.[77]

The water to which al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ exposed himself was primordial water that has no color or taste, since water that descends from heaven is the origin of all water on earth. God says: **Hast thou not considered that God sends down water from the sky, and conducts it as springs in the earth**.[78] For he ﷺ is the isthmus between the Real and creation, and the intermediary between the realm of invincibility (*jabarūt*) and the earth of descending revelations (*arḍ al-tanazzulāt*). He is the inmost center who brings together the foundation of the sciences, and through whom the sciences and secrets flow onto the people in accordance with their preparedness. Ibn Mashīsh, God be pleased with him, alludes to this meaning when he says:

“Dear God, invoke blessings upon the one from whom the

secrets split, the lights gush forth, in whom the realities ascend, and upon whom the sciences of Adam descended so that he incapacitated all people."

The Prophets, peace and blessings be upon them, are the people who are most replenished by his noble presence, followed by the knowers of God, as per the hadith: "The knowers are the heirs of the prophets."[79] Given that this is the case, the water into which Mūsā, peace be upon him, was cast is a secondary water that took on the color of the Glass Container (*zujāja*) that he flowed through. The water of knowledge that he took from the Law of the All-Merciful is water drawn from the universal and all-encompassing Muḥammadan Presence, and the ark is an allusion to the body, which is the grave that encloses the secret of the spirit.

God first created stillness, which generated coldness. Then He looked at it with a gaze of love and beauty, and the stillness was stirred into motion out of awe of the Real and intense yearning. Heat was generated from this motion, and the heat was coupled with wetness, which resulted in the four elements—fire, air, water, and earth—and from those constituents all of creation came into being. God then placed these elements in the human body, which is a transcription of the worlds. To this effect, Sayyidunā ʿAlī said: "You consider yourself to be a small entity, yet within you the macrocosm is enfolded."

Since the Real blew His spirit into this body, the Adamite is an image of the upper world and the lower world. As such, anything that you imagine in your thoughts is a creature like you, and everything that you conceive of in your mind is an existent, even if you have not previously seen it, and no matter how strange it may be, for nothing can become imprinted in your imagination unless it issues from the presence of "Be"—so understand!

We said that the ark is an allusion to Mūsā's body. When the spirit, as it were, was cast into it, he began to cast and things were receptive to his activity. His presence was a manifestation-site for the levels of casting. God says: **He cast his staff, and behold, it was a serpent manifest**,[80] because the levels of casting were perfected within him. God also says of him: **I cast upon thee a love from Me, that thou mightest be formed under My eye**.[81] Thus God blessed him with knowledge and gnosis through the wisdom of his casting into the ocean. He exercised control over whatever God decreed and willed, in accordance with his knowledge. He governed his ark through the spiritual force within him, and through this God gave him venerability and distinction, because the veils between his spirit and his body were lifted, so that the properties of the spirit flowed over the ark. To this effect, God mentions what remained of Mūsā that manifested in Saul, or Ṭālūt, when He says: **Their prophet said to them, "Truly the sign of his sovereignty shall be that the ark come to you bearing tranquility from your Lord and a remnant left by the House of Moses and the House of Aaron, borne by the angels. Truly in that is a sign for you, if you are believers"**.[82] Mūsā's venerability and standing remained in the ark, and gave Saul the glad tidings of a journey through the spheres and sublime secrets. Through it he came to know the esoteric realities of the three worlds.

Know, dear wayfarers, that the Real made the spirit as a governor of the human body. It rules over it, and the body is like an instrument that is steered by the spirit however it pleases. Thus, whoever gazes at the sensory realm finds that the Real governs the world by the world. That is, he beholds the interdependence, complementarity, and mutual benefit of all things. Each thing depends on another. If the sky did not rain, the earth would not grow plants; if you do not plow, you

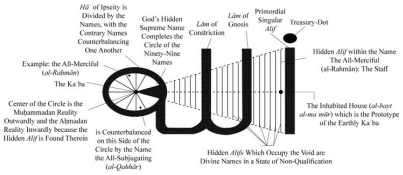
cannot eat; if it were not for reproduction and intermarriage, there would be no procreation, and so on. Beholding the plurality of these corporeal figures gives a picture of things serving each other, governing their affairs among themselves. For the world is divided into producers and recipients of effects, and that which sometimes produces effects may become a recipient of effects at other times. The Real governs the world such that all things subsist through the Real.

However, when you behold things through inner vision, you find that God's commanding reality and names govern and manage the corporeal figures. You witness that the Real governs the world through the form of the world; that is, through the Perfect Man. To this effect, the hadith has reached us that "God created Adam upon His form."[83] God made him upon His form through the properties of His names and attributes, without any indwelling or unification. The Perfect Man is thus the form of the cosmos because he is the inmost core that brings together all that is scattered in the cosmos.

Such is the state of Mūsā, who was the disclosure-site of the Hidden *Alif* of the All-Merciful. He exercised control over parts of the world by God's leave, through the knowledge of the *Alif*, and in accordance with divine power and will. Thus he exercised control over the ocean and rocks. This is also the secret of why, as a hadith tells us, Āsiya, may God be pleased with her, came to the Pharaoh and said [that baby Moses would be] **A comfort for me and for you**,[84] Pharaoh responded, "He will be for you; as for me, I have no need for him." The Messenger of God ﷺ said: "I swear by the One who is worthy of being sworn by, that had the Pharaoh affirmed him as his comfort just as his wife did, then God would have guided him just as He guided her. But he

was forbidden from that."[85] This is because any presumption of good or bad faith you have in the Perfect Man is applied to you. So chose for yourself whatever you want, for he is the pure mirror through which you gaze at your own true nature.

The secret of this matter is that the first gaze, prior to the creation of creation, was a gaze of the non-delimited names in the void. That is, Hidden *Alifs* which were names in a state of non-delimitation, were placed. The latter's specific characteristics manifested in stillness when the Real disclosed Himself therein, whereupon the dictates of each name manifested. Thus, everything in the cosmos is none other than a trace of the name-disclosures, and the Real governs the cosmos through His most beautiful names. The following illustration explains the relationship of what we have just mentioned to the disciple's wayfaring:


Hā' of Ipseity is Divided by the Names, with the Contrary Names Counterbalancing One Another
Example: the All-Merciful (al-Raḥmān)
The Ka'ba
Center of the Circle is the Muḥammadan Reality Outwardly and the Aḥmadan Reality Inwardly because the Hidden Alif is Found Therein
God's Hidden Supreme Name Completes the Circle of the Ninety-Nine Names
Law of Constriction
Law of Gnosis
Primordial Singular Alif
Treasury-Dot
Hidden Alif within the Name The All-Merciful (al-Raḥmān): The Staff
The Inhabited House (al-bayt al-ma ʿmūr) which is the Prototype of the Earthly Ka'ba
is Counterbalanced on this Side of the Circle by the Name the All-Subjugating (al-Qahhār)
Hidden Alifs Which Occupy the Void are Divine Names in a State of Non-Qualification

The *Hāʾ* of Identity [or of Ipseity], is divided by the most beautiful names into ninety-nine parts. Each part takes one of the divine names, and stands opposite to its counterpart on the other side. With the completion of the one-hundred, there is the Supreme Name in which all the most-beautiful names are enfolded. All the names come together at the center of the *Hāʾ*, whose inward dimension is the Hidden *Alif*. This is why we say that it is a Muḥammadan-Aḥmadan Handful. It is a Muḥammadan *Mīm*, within which there is an Aḥmadan *Alif*. We also say that it is the Kaʿba, since the Kaʿba is the center of the earth and the *qibla* toward which we pray. Similarly, the center of the *Hāʾ* is the *qibla* to which the wayfarers turn in their constant prayer. In his wayfaring, the disciple starts at the *Hāʾ*-center and journeys toward the Singular *Alif*. When

the disciple settles in the direction of the Supreme Name in the circle, his journey is shortened for him and the veils between him and the *Alif* are lifted. As for the two *Lāms*, they take on the number of the seventy-thousand veils between the Real and creation. The Beloved ﷺ said: "Beneath God there are seventy-thousand veils of Light and darkness. If a soul were to hear a whisper of those veils, it would pass away."[86] Piercing through these veils is easy for the one whose sole aim is the Secret of the Secret. As for the one who settles in the direction of one name, he must complete the full *Hāʾ*-cycle in order to pass through the ninety-nine names in their entirety. When the spiritual traveler attains realization of the Hidden *Alif*, he will find himself to be journeying through all the ninety-nine names, just as the number one flows through all the other numbers.

The manifestation of Sayyidunā Mūsā, peace be upon him, was from the *Alif* of the All-Merciful (*al-Alif al-Raḥmānī*) that we explained earlier, for he is a Prophet and a Messenger. He thus exercised control over the *Hāʾ*-stillness with his staff, and manifested its letters in it. For prophecy begins from the *Alif* and descends down to the *Hāʾ* in order to bring about God's rulings. Sainthood, for its part, begins its journey from and within the *Hāʾ*, and ascends to its liminal position in the *Alif*. Moreover, the saint only attains knowledge, not realization, of the *Alif*—so understand!

It is in this sense that one understands the one who said: "We, the friends of God, plunged into an ocean at whose shore the Prophets stood." The shore where the Prophets stood is the *Hāʾ*. For they descend from the *Alif* above down to the *Hāʾ* below, whereas the journey of the saints is upward. For Prophethood is sheer purity, and it was sent in order to bind people to the Law of the All-Merciful. As for Sainthood, its journey and its direction is toward the realm of

the absolute where the Prophet begins, and in the end the saint attains none other than the isthmus-dot in the *Alif*.

8. The Prime Matter of the Names (*Hayūlā al-Asmāʾ*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 23rd Rajab 1435 / May 23rd 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Know, dear servant of God, that every name with which the Real is named in His Holy Book or the blessed Sunna has a particular effect that manifests upon its disclosure. Every name-disclosure (*tajallī asmāʾī*) falls inside the circle of mercy because of the special nature of the name the All-Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*), as God says, **The All-Merciful, settled upon the Throne**.[87] When the names interact and interconnect, the previously nonexistent effect becomes manifest.

When the wayfarer's inner vision penetrates into the realm of possibility, he witnesses how every effect has a connection to two or more names. This becomes evident to the one who invokes the singular Name (*al-ism al-mufrad*), the Name that encompasses all the names and attributes. Invoking this noble name strengthens the luminosity of the invoker, so that he witnesses how every atom in God's vast creation is connected to one or two of the Most Beautiful Names of God. When this happens, God makes him aware of the spirit of every name that discloses itself to him, which is the distinct characteristic that is inherent to each name. God allows him to witness the names at the level of non-delimitation as they truly are, free from letters and writing. He witnesses how, when they interact with one another, their state is changed from non-manifestation (*buṭūn*) to manifestation (*ẓuhūr*), or from non-delimitation (*iṭlāq*) to

delimitation (*taqyīd*). For instance, God's name the Powerful (*al-Qadīr*) in a state of non-delimitation is free from letters and writing, hallowed beyond the *Alif*, the *Lām*, the *Qāf*, the *Dāl*, the *Yāʾ* and the *Rāʾ* [that make up the name *al-Qadīr*]. However, when it manifests in the *Hāʾ* of Identity, which brings out its manifestation-sites and implications into the sensory realm on the level of delimitation, it is whelmed in the attribute of being. Thus the letters are written, and the ink of non-delimitation is shaped into delimited letters.

Then, when the name *al-Qadīr* joins with the name the Light (*al-Nūr*), it manifests in the heart of the novice wayfarer in the form of a Niche (*mishkāt*), because he is unable to bear the visitations of the Light unless it takes on a likeness (*mathal*). Thus, the name moves from the state of non-delimitation to the manifestation-site of delimitation. All these forms and modes of delimitation are aspects of annihilation (*fanāʾ*).

An example to illustrate this—and to God belongs to most sublime example— is the carpenter, who moves wood from the non-manifestation of its primordial substance to whatever state is desired for it, such as a table or a chair. Likewise, the names come to manifest their inevitable dictates, such that their disclosures manifest as they intermingle.

So you must know them, O seeker, by their original natures in both delimitation and non-delimitation. The way to attain this knowledge is to follow the verse, **Those who invoke Allāh standing, sitting and on their sides**,[88] for God says that they invoke the All-Encompassing Name, not the name of the All-Merciful or any other name. Then the verse continues, **And they ponder the creation of the heavens and the earth, and they say "Our Lord, you did not create this in vain! Glory be unto You! Spare us from the torment of the fire"**.[89] The beginning of the realm of

possibility was stillness set into motion by names seeking their inevitable dictates, which caused existence (*wujūd*) to manifest in its entirety. All of this was then combined into a distinct and singular prototype, of which the blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "God created Adam in His form." This Perfect Man therefore became the embodiment of all presences and attributes. Not every human being has this honor, however, though he may share Adam's outward form, because he at odds with Adam's inner reality. Another narration of the hadith has, "God created Adam in the form of the All-Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*),"[90] which is to say in the form of the name of the name, the secret of the secret, which is the *Lām* of Constriction (*lām al-qabḍ*), the second *Lām* of the divine name *Allāh*, the first being the *Lām* of Gnosis (*lām al-maʿrifa*). And by virtue of being created upon the *Lām* of Constriction, he became the vicegerent (*khalīfa*) and the locus of the gaze of the Real. The human being is thus the concealed secret (*ṭalsum*) and the pure meaning. The one who understands this meaning, and acknowledges its inner true sublime worth, will pierce through it unto knowledge of his Creator.

If you do not wish to be deprived of the grace (*baraka*) of the descended revelation (*tanzīl*), then take what was transmitted from the Master of the Messengers exactly as it is in its outward meaning, without interpreting it metaphorically (*taʾwīl*), and then consider the level from which this discourse emerged, and of what level it was speaking. For the supreme Essence has attributes, names, properties and acts, and it is the sum total of all these that tells us what the holy Essence is. We cannot describe it except as it is related to us in the Holy Book, or as the noble Messenger described it.

Now, since the Essence, attributes, names, acts and properties are five levels (*dhāt, ṣifāt, asmāʾ, afʿāl, aḥkām*),

and since the numerical value of the letter *Hāʾ* is five, it is necessary for the one who wishes to enter into the *Hāʾ* of Identity, which brings together the five levels, to attain realization of the five pillars of Islam with diligence. He must do this until he is graced with direct knowledge of God's togetherness (*maʿiyya*), so that he witnesses the togetherness of the Essence as it manifests through the names and attributes. God's togetherness is not like that of created things, because the togetherness of a created being only lasts as long as you are with him, and ceases to be when you are apart from him. When you separate God's name from what it names, and His attribute from its object, you treat Him as a created being without realizing it—and He is hallowed beyond that. The one who desires to know God's Oneness must therefore depart from his bodily nature and stand at the door of God's folk.

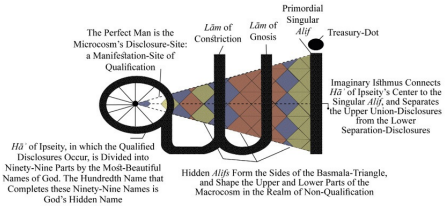
God can be known and also cannot be known; it is both yes and no. This is separation and union (*faṣl* and *waṣl*). The essence of separation lies in union, and the essence of union lies in separation. In His Holy Book, God guides us to a twofold Path to knowing Him: witnessing His signs upon the horizons, and witnessing His signs within the self. He says, **We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and within themselves, until it becomes clear to them that He is the Real**.[91] To contemplate the horizons means to contemplate the heavens and the earth, where there is the presence of the spatial vastness. As for contemplating the soul, it means to contemplate the universal all-encompassing subtlety that is the perfect human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*), within whom God engendered all the realities in the macrocosm (*al-ʿālam al-kabīr*). He is the presence of non-spatial vastness in the manifestation-site of delimitation (*maẓhar al-taqyīd*). It is as though He brought forth Hidden

Alifs that could not be encompassed in the horizons nor in the soul, but could be encompassed in his heart. He says, **We have ennobled the children of Adam**;[92] that is, given him honor and high degree. That this verse is number seventy alludes to how the perfect human being is the manifestation-site of the seventy veils, in the sense that God brought together all the names in him by virtue of the *Hāʾ* of Identity.

He is thus united to this cosmos and separated from it at the same time: united in the sense that he is a part of it, and separated in the sense that he is a cosmos in and of himself. To this effect, Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī says, "The cosmos encompasses you only in your corporeal nature; it cannot encompass you in your spirit nature." The human being contains heavens in the form of the brain; stars in the form of the outer and inner sensory faculties; a throne in the form of the spirit; a pedestal (*kursī*) in the form of the soul; a pen in the form of the intellect; angels in the form of the faculties; mountains in the form of the bones; hills in the form of the veins; plants in the form of the hair, and so on.

Then God appointed this perfect human being as the spirit of the macrocosm, and it is for this reason that everything is under his subjugation (*taskhīr*). God says, **He subjugated unto you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth, altogether. Truly in that are signs for a people who reflect**.[93] All creatures that glorify feel ardent love for him because he embodies all the presences, for he is the heart of cosmos inasmuch as his heart is the locus for the Muḥammadan reality, and the Muḥammadan Light flows through all beings. Thus it is as though the Light that flows through everything longs for his Light, which is disclosed in his heart.

To better understand this, let us depict it with an illustration.


Primordial Singular Alif
Treasury-Dot
Lām of Constriction
Lām of Gnosis
The Perfect Man is the Microcosm's Disclosure-Site: a Manifestation-Site of Qualification
Imaginary Isthmus Connects Hā' of Ipseity's Center to the Singular Alif, and Separates the Upper Union-Disclosures from the Lower Separation-Disclosures
Hā' of Ipseity, in which the Qualified Disclosures Occur, is Divided into Ninety-Nine Parts by the Most-Beautiful Names of God. The Hundredth Name that Completes these Ninety-Nine Names is God's Hidden Name
Hidden Alifs Form the Sides of the Basmala-Triangle, and Shape the Upper and Lower Parts of the Macrocosm in the Realm of Non-Qualification

The more you depart from the *Hāʾ*-delimitation, the more you come to discover the names at the level of non-delimitation, because what lies between the *Hāʾ* and the *Alif* of the Name, the void between the two, is all non-delimited. The disciple must always focus on the center, where the point of Identity is, because to contemplate the center is to contemplate the straight subtle isthmus-line that connects the *Hāʾ* of Identity to the Singular *Alif*. Focusing at the center of the circle is to orient oneself towards the Muḥammadan Aḥmadan *Qibla*, which is disclosure-site of the perfect human. As for turning to that which is above the isthmus or beneath it, it may distract you from your goal. Reflect on how the righteous ones, when they commenced prayer, would act as though Paradise were to their right (corresponding to the part of the name above the isthmus-line), and Hell were to their left (beneath the isthmus-line), and as though their feet were upon the bridge that leads over Hell to Paradise (corresponding to the imaginary isthmus-line in the name). God Himself was their *Qibla*, the Singular *Alif*. Just so, the wayfarer must make it his sole concern to arrive at and attain union with the Singular *Alif*.

9. The Light of Union (*Nūr al-Waṣl*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 1st Shaʿbān 1435 / May 30th 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

We have previously mentioned the wisdom of casting Sayyidunā Mūsā, peace be upon him, in the ark, then casting him in the ocean. It remains for us to discuss this event as an aspect of the manifestation of union and separation (*waṣl* and *faṣl*). This is because casting a young child into an ark then casting it into the ocean would usually spell certain destruction, but in this case God manifested the attribute of salvation (*najāt*) in the disclosure-site of destruction. That is to say, on the level of outward separation, God manifested the transcendent meanings of union, which took the form of salvation and life for Sayyidunā Mūsā. That is one aspect; another is that Pharaoh wanted to slay Mūsā; this was during the time when he had ordered that all newborns be slain. This is another of the manifestations of separation, because through it God brings out a union from the heart of this separation. Thus He appointed Pharaoh himself as the adoptive parent of Mūsā. This is because Mūsā came into existence clothed with the Lights of the verse, **I cast upon you a love from Me**,[94] and so anyone who saw him loved him, even Pharaoh.

From the forms of this separation by which he was tested, Mūsā the Confidant of God acquired wisdom from the All-Sustaining Living One, who said, **We tried you with trials**.[95] Thus, he acquired the pure meanings of union, which manifested in two forms: a sensory form, and a supra-sensory form. The sensory form was the life that he acquired when he was saved from being killed, and the supra-sensory form was

the life of knowledge that God bestowed upon him from the water of life. This is the life God wants every human being to live—a life of luminous knowledge. He says, **Is he who is dead and to whom we give life, making for him a Light by which to walk among mankind, like unto one who is in darkness from which he does not emerge?**[96] Thus, when God gives someone a Light of union from the essence of his lower self's separation, at the hands of a training, nurturing shaykh (*shaykh murabbī*), He gives him the life of the heart after his heart had languished in the deathly pall of other-than-God. This is divine Light, cast into the hearts of the lovers. When you contemplate this Light with the attribute of knowledge, you find it to be the very essence of knowledge. When you contemplate it with the attribute of proximity to God, you find it to be a rope that connects the servant to the Lord, for it is the embodying essence of all that is good.

This Light is the balance of divine justice (*mīzān al-qisṭās al-ilahī*) with which the wayfarer weighs his state with God. Therefore, if you wish to know your proximity to Him, or your knowledge of Him, then look into your innermost heart. If you find Light therein, you will find with it knowledge, proximity and love. If you do not find Light there, then the realities of faith do not exist in your heart. And it is in the measure of the size of that Light within you that you come to discover whether you are near or far. You come to know the extent of your distance, and the extent of your knowledge.

This Light is a subtle flowing entity. That is why God says that it is a **Light by which to walk among mankind**.[97] He does not say "to walk between mankind," because the Light, on account of its subtle lordly grace, pierces through all human bodies and obliterates all forms within the realm of possibility from the site of the heart. For it is beginningless and pre-eternal, and when the pre-eternal is united with the

temporal, the temporal vanishes and the pre-eternal remains.

Now, the knowledge that yields the fruit of fear is knowledge that bursts from the presence of Light. Those who possess it are the knowers whom God praises in the verse, **Only the knowers among His servants fear God**.[98] Fear and awe manifest upon the carpet of direct witnessing, and so long as you affirm existence for your own self, you are ignorant. God affirms things in the realm of possibility through His subtle grace, which flows through this realm of non-existence, until He manifests non-existence within non-existence.

Dear wayfarer, if you desire to exit from the lowlands of animality (*ḥayawāniyya*) to the realities for which God has ennobled you, you must practice self-surveillance (*murāqaba*) of your state with God. Look at your innermost heart: has it been meshed with the Light of faith? The believer who has taste (*dhawq*) is the one in whose heart God casts a Light. When Light descends into the hearts of those who orient themselves to God, it is intensely jealous. If it discovers in your heart doubt or carelessness with regard to the rulings of God, or if it finds it to be filled with egotism that prevents you from giving others their due and returning their trusts, then you should know that just as that Light has entered into your heart, it will leave it as well. If you return to the darkness, you will remain ignorant of your own reality, by which God ennobled you over all other creatures.

Dear wayfarer, faith is of two sorts: a faith of conformism (*taqlīd*) for the masses, and a faith of luminosity and realization for the elites. Reflect on how the Prophet ﷺ compares the believer to the Light of God when he says, “Fear the perspicacity of the believer, for he sees with the Light of God.”[99] If you observe the rulings of the religion without Light, you are like an employee who works only to

receive payment. But if you are a believer by virtue of the Light that descended into your heart, you are in the registry of the lovers, in a state of presence.

Now the heart of the believer is a luminous Lamp (*sirāj*) by which he may behold the realities of things. It is for this reason that a warning was issued about his perspicacity, as well as the truthfulness of his tongue, which reflects the truthfulness and sincerity of his heart. The hadith says, "Beware of the perspicacity of the believer, for he sees with the Light of God, and he speaks with divine success."[100] The reason for this warning is that when a believer who is in this state casts his gaze upon you, his regard may either elevate you to the highest of heights, or reduce you to the lowest of lows. He might draw you near, or send you afar, by virtue of the perspicacity (*firāsa*) that God bestowed upon him, and by virtue of being eclipsed in the presence of the Light.

As for the one who has a dark heart, he is like a person who dwells in a dark home beneath the earth, fumbling about through three layers of darkness: the darkness of creed; the darkness of speech; and the darkness of deeds. One darkness leads to the other. The way out of these layers of darkness is the Path of invocation through permission (*idhn*); a Path that is connected to the secret core of the Blessed Tree. For when a person begins to invoke God, he enters into the arena of the greater jihad (*al-jihād al-akbar*), which is the struggle against the lower self. In order to come out victorious from this battle, he must pay no regard to others, and must work on himself exclusively, without leaving his grave which is his own soul.

The Path of invocation is the Path of guidance that enables one to attain the station of bewilderment, which is life. The intellect is incapable of perceiving this station, however, because its means of perception prevents it from intellecting

two opposites at once. As for the heart, it directly tastes the pure meaning of the two opposites, and so it attains knowledge of God. Note how God says, **He is the First, the Last, the Manifest, and the Nonmanifest**,[101] thus bringing opposites together. In order to understand this, you need genuine and sound taste, for verifying this truth is not something that can be expressed with words. It is not enough to say that God is the Manifest; rather, it is necessary to directly taste the meaning of His manifestation.

The intellect is incapable of contemplating what it means for two opposites to unite. Yet faith confirms this, because it is a truthful speech. The Path to realized faith in the heart is what allows you to attain bewilderment, because when your heart is stirred into motion, it is as though the entirety of creation has moved. If, through this movement of the heart, you do not arrive at bewilderment in God, or bewilderment in the spiritual realm, then your heart is dead. The unveiling of the heart is the way to directly tasting the realities of faith. You may happen to be in a small home in which you behold countless angels. If you try to understand this with the intellect, it becomes impossible, because you will conclude that the home does not have enough space for that many angels. When a disciple finds a Shaykh of training who casts the gleam of Light into his heart, he should know that the entire cosmos, from the divine Throne down to the earth, is brought together in it. Do not belittle the Light when it divulges your state and you find that it is small. It is you who is small, because you are far from it. If you were close, you would see it before you see your own soul. Moreover, when it unveils its reality to you, it reduces you and what you see to naught.

The eye deems the star to be small
But the fault lies in the smallness of the viewer, not the

star.[102]

Dear servants of God, the twinkling gleam (*lamḥa*) that manifests in the hearts of wayfarers brings together all things within its fold. God makes this plain to us in the Holy Book when He says: **Our Command is naught but one, like the twinkling (lamḥ) of an eye**.[103] What this means is that all of the time that humanity has lived, and will live, in this world and the next, and all of the cosmic changes, are for God like the twinkling of an eye. Dear wayfarer, you have this twinkling gleam that brings together all that is in the heavens and the earth. Why then do you have such low esteem for it? **Alas for the servants!**[104]

Revere it! Revere it! That is the greatest Path and the supreme elixir to attain the eminent presence. Whoever lacks reverence cannot hope to travel the Path. Ours is the Path of love, and love's fountainhead is reverence. Strive, God have mercy on you, for you will sooner or later find yourself among the people of the grave—and then what will you do?

10. Motion and Rest (*al-ḥaraka waʾl-sukūn*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 7th Shaʿbān 1435 / June 6th 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Know, dear disciple, that motion is an existential act that denotes life, while rest is an expression of total death. Whoever finds rest in the presence of the Real, as per the dictate of "die before you die," such that his spirit ascends to the realm of the Real, is enlivened by the subtle graces that disclose themselves from the treasuries of, **Is he who was dead, and to whom We give life, making for him a Light by which to walk among mankind**.[105] Thus, whoever verifies his own attribute, which is the darkness of nonexistence, is replenished by the Real, who sprinkles His Light upon him. The blessed Prophet ﷺ said: "God created His creation in darkness, then He cast His Light upon it. Whoever is touched by that Light is guided, and whoever is not touched by it is misguided."[106] Thereupon, his rest is set into motion. Do you not see how the earth is in a state of rest, and when water showers upon it, it moves? God says: **And thou sees the earth desiccated, but when We send down water upon it, it stirs and swells and produces every delightful kind**.[107] Similarly, the knower of God finds himself in a state of rest, and when he receives the waters of life, he stirs into motion. Out of his motion, all delightful kinds of lights and secrets are produced. For the lights are the delights of the spiritual realm, and the secrets are the delights of the invincible realm (*jabarūt*).

Concerning the Path, God's folk have said: "Its beginning

is madness, its middle is sciences, and its end is rest." Its beginning is madness when the secret of the Essence is unveiled to the disciple, and he is astonished by witnessing God's grandeur. Thereupon, the tongue moves, the limbs move, and he speaks of what lies beyond the intellect. As for the middle, it is sciences when he awakens from his intoxication and returns to the attributes and the names. As for its end, it is rest when he attains the union of the All. The first rest was the rest of nonexistence, and the second was the rest of existence.

The earth represents the feminine which, when it joins in matrimony with masculine water, produces a pair from all things. The descent of rainwater upon the earth is really a disclosure of the name the Living upon it, so that life may flow through it, and so that it may have motion. The motion of the earth generates vegetation, and produces none other than evens and pairs. Whoever beholds it through union finds it to be one inasmuch as it is an earth; and whoever beholds what is produced from it finds multiplicity in it. That multiplicity is from the earth, and to the earth it shall return. In fact, the universe itself was a singular entity; God says: **Have those who disbelieve not considered that the heavens and the earth were a stitched mass, and We unstitched them? And We made every living thing from water**.[108] The engendered universe was brought together in a single glimmer or particle. The particle was unstitched, and multiplicity manifested from it. From that single particular, multiplicity appeared in all its plurality. Moreover, if we return to the hadith of Jābir concerning the Muḥammadan Light from which the Real created all things, we find that multiplicity emerged from the one. The origin is therefore the handful of Light from which all existences were derived.

The wisdom behind all of this is to attain direct knowledge

of God. For the Real makes Himself known to us through each of His disclosures in order for us to know Him. He is exclusively One in respect of His Essence, even though the multiplicity of His names are affixed to Him. This multiplicity causes the variety and plurality of disclosures, even though all return to one Essence. The disclosures are multiple, while the divine Self is one. Similarly, when you consider the singular Name, you find it to be solitary; but when you consider how the Name encompasses all the names and qualities, you discover that it comprises names that are beyond reckoning and calculation. The Prophet ﷺ said in the supplication by which he taught us to dispel grief and anxiety,

"Dear God, I am Your servant and the son of Your servant. My forelock is in Your Hand; Your judgment over me is done; Your decree concerning me is just; I beseech You through each name that belongs to You, by which You have called Yourself, or which You have sent down in Your Book, or taught to any one of Your creatures, or kept to Yourself in Your knowledge of the unseen, to make the holy Qurʾān the springtime of my heart, the Light of my breast, the remedy for my grief, and the dispeller of my anxiety and sorrow."[109]

The names and qualities are thus many, and the Path to felicity is the Path of characterizing oneself by the names that one is permitted to assume, such as the Noble (*al-Karīm*), the Pardoner (*al-ʿAfū*), the All-Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*), and so forth. Moreover, in the *Hāʾ* of Identity, the names have counterparts by virtue of their oppositionality. As for the names that have no opposites, such as the Only (*al-Aḥad*), the One (*al-Wāḥid*), the Self-Sufficient (*al-Ṣamad*), and the Singular (*al-Fard*), they are located in the center of the *Hāʾ* of Identity. Moreover, seeing the Name through the gate of the *Hāʾ* alludes to multiplicity from the One. With respect to

wayfaring, when the piercing star manifests itself to you from different directions, then you are journeying toward the unity of the attributes.

But if you focus on the center of your heart, then you are heading toward the unity of the Essence. Listen to the words of the Beloved ﷺ, who said: “Place Light in my heart,” thus alluding to the unity of the Essence. Concerning the illumination of directions, he said, “and place Light above me, and Light beneath me, and Light to my right, and Light to my left” thereby alluding to the unity of the attributes. This is why we begin the disciple’s journey with the unity of the Essence, then we bring him back to the unity of the attributes, so that if he were to die, he would die as a verifier of the unity of the Essence and as a monotheist.

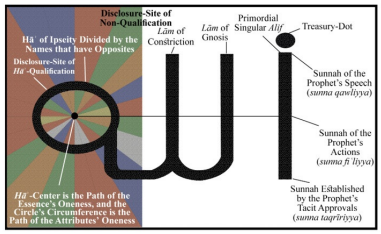
You should know, moreover, that to profess unity of the attributes is to bring about both the name and its opposite. This is implied by way of allusion in the Prophet’s ﷺ supplication: “and place on my right Light, and on my left Light…,” mentioning each direction and its opposite. Likewise, in the *Hāʾ* of Identity, you bring about every name and its opposite. As for the Essence, you must unite all the names within it, and especially the names of the Essence that have no opposites. This is done through the practice of wayfaring by focusing on the Light in the center of the circle of the Shuʿayb-heart. For when you plunge into the center, you arrive at the unity of the Essence.

God’s folk have established a tangible allusion to this in wayfaring by placing the rosary of ninety-nine beads around their necks, upon their jugular vein, as if to say: “I am dissolved in the center of the *Hāʾ*.” If you wish to tread their Path, then bring together this absolute annihilation and complete negation, which is the manifestation-site of “no god” (*lā ilāha*), and delimit it after passing away in the union

of the *Hāʾ*, then pass away from all gods other than God, the greatest of which is the pursuit of caprice, and then proclaim "but God" (*illā Allāh*). You will then become a Hidden *Alif*. Then bring together the complete annihilation, and bind it, obliterate it completely, and plunge into the center of the Hāʾ, then divide it into two halves: one that pertains to beauty, the other to majesty; one that is nonmanifest, the other manifest. This is their approach and their way, if you wish to ascend to the cushion of the innermost Secret.

The delimitation of the absolute occurs in the *Hāʾ* of Identity. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Between my home and my pulpit is one of the meadows of the Garden,"[110] thereby delimiting the absolute, or the Garden, between his grave and his pulpit, a distance that spans just a few meters at the sensory level. As for the Garden at the level of the absolute, it is just as God informed us: **A Garden whose breadth is as the breadth of heaven and earth**.[111]

This is a glance at what discloses itself within the *Hāʾ* of Identity, which is the Seal of al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. For he is the City of Knowledge, and entering it is conditional upon entering through the Gate of ʿAlī, may God ennoble his countenance. This is why the chain of transmission for every Sufi Path goes back to ʿAlī, for he completed the reading of all the letters, and carried in his hand the Hidden *Alif* with its two halves, thereby dividing Light and darkness, which was his famous two-pronged sword. To help you understand *Hāʾ*-wayfaring within the Name toward the *Alif*, and the delimitation of the absolute in the *Hāʾ* of Identity, we give the following illustration:


Disclosure-Site of Non-Qualification
Hā' of Ipseity Divided by the Names that have Opposites
Disclosure-Site of Hā'-Qualification
Hā'-Center is the Path of the Essence's Oneness, and the Circle's Circumference is the Path of the Attributes' Oneness
Lām of Constriction
Lām of Gnosis
Primordial Singular Alif
Treasury-Dot
Sunnah of the Prophet's Speech (sunna qawliyya)
Sunnah of the Prophet's Actions (sunna fi'liyya)
Sunnah Established by the Prophet's Tacit Approvals (sunna taqririyya)

You should know, moreover, that in the exoteric realm of the Law, a Sunna of action (*sunna fiʿliyya*) has a stronger weight, whereas in the esoteric realm, a Sunna of speech (*sunna fiʿliyya*) is stronger. Wayfaring thus begins toward the *Alif* on the basis of what you affirm in your heart. If you affirm it in relation to the divine attributes, then you must unite the opposites. But if you affirm it in relation to the names, then you must become absent from letters and traces by directly witnessing the flow of the Name. As for the Essence, you must gather your saintly aspiration toward the *Alif*-isthmus by plunging into the center of the *Hāʾ* and uniting speech, deeds, and affirmations. Then you shall attain the oneness of the Essence (*tawḥīd al-dhāt*).

However, with respect to the absolute, it is not possible to restrict the Name. Hence, God's folk differ in defining the Supreme Name (*al-ism al-aʿẓam*). Some say that it is the Singular Name; others say that it is the name the All-Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*); and so on. Each perspective is correct in one sense but not in another. For it is not possible to define the Supreme Name except by considering it from all directions.

Dear servants of God, wayfaring is realized only by the one in whose heart the Light of al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ settles. For one of the features of the Companions' guidance is that they learnt faith before the Qurʾān. According to ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar, may God be pleased with him, "There were long periods of time when we would see faith before the Qurʾān. Then a sura would descend upon Muḥammad ﷺ and we

would learn what is lawful, prohibited, commanded, and restrained, and what we should halt with in it, just as you learn the Qurʾān today. Moreover, I have seen men these days who are given the Qurʾān before faith, and they read from the Opening Chapter to the end without knowing its commandments and prohibitions, nor what he should halt with. He disperses them like low-quality dates."[112]

The same holds for the righteous forefathers. Sayyidunā al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, may God be pleased with him, said:

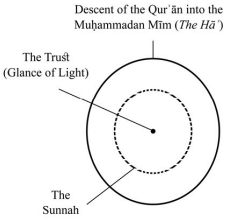
"This Qurʾān is being recited by slaves and children who have no knowledge of its inner interpretation. Its verses are only to be pondered by those who apply them, and its letters are not to be memorized if its rules are neglected. Some say that they have read the Qurʾān without dropping a single letter. By God! They have dropped its entirety! For the Qurʾān is not visible upon their character or deeds. Some of them say: 'I read the entire sura in one breath!' By God, these are not Qurʾān reciters, scholars, wise men, or pious people. When has a reciter ever been like that? May God not multiply their likes."[113]

Dear servants of God, when the Light of faith enters into the depths of the heart, then the heart expands and becomes prepared to receive the Lights of revelation, and it imbibes its worlds through prophetic guidance. This Light is the trust that we were entrusted to protect. Ḥudhayfa, may God be pleased with him, said:

"The Messenger of God ﷺ related to us two prophetic narrations, one of which I have seen fulfilled, and the other of which I await still. He related to us that trust descended into the root of men's hearts, then the Qurʾān was revealed, and they learned it from the Qurʾān and then they learned it from the Sunna. The Prophet ﷺ also related to us how trust will be lifted. He said: 'A person will go to sleep, and trust will be

taken away from his heart. Only its trace will remain like the trace of a dark spot. Then he will go to sleep, and trust will be lifted from his heart, so that its trace will resemble the trace of a blister, as when you drop hot embers on your foot and it swells up, though there is nothing inside.' He dropped some pebbles on his foot to illustrate this. Then he said: 'People will trade, but there will hardly be a trustworthy person among them, to the point that it will be said, "in such-and-such tribe there is an honest man," and later it will be said about a man, "What a wise, polite and strong man he is!," though he will not have faith equal even to a mustard seed in his heart.' No doubt, there came a time when I did not mind trading with anyone of you, for if he was a Muslim his Islam would compel him to pay me what he owed me, and if he was a Jew or a Christian, the Muslim official would compel him to pay me what he owed me. But today I trade only with certain people."[114]

The trust that is intended in this hadith is the Muḥammadan Light that pierces the hearts of men, and by virtue of which genuine faith is realized. The following image illustrates the relation between the Qurʾān, the Sunna, and the trust:



The one who preserves the Muḥammadan Light in his heart will arrive at the reality of faith through ineluctable witnessing. As for the one who neglects it, he has neglected the real trust, and what remains of his religion is a form without spirit. So make every effort, may God give you success, to cultivate the Light of the Lord. Your time will be joyful, your lives will be full of grace, and you will attain

abundant blessings in a short period.

11. Revealed Inspiration (*Waḥy al-Ilhām*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 14th Shaʿbān 1435 / 13th June 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Know, may God have mercy on you, that the presences of the Prophets ﷺ are none other than a glimmer from the experiential taste of the Chosen One ﷺ, and a color from among his revealed colors. As for the reality of his all-encompassing presence, it has no color. Or you might say that the presences of the Prophets are none other than a word from among the words that flow from his ocean of "I was granted the all-encompassing words" (*ūtītu jawāmiʿ al-kalim*).[115] Thus, the Mūsā-presence is one among the aspects of the all-encompassing Muḥammadan presence, and one of his rivers that flow into his tremendous ocean.

The Mūsā-presence is considered to be one of the closest presences to the Muḥammadan presence, following the presence of ʿĪsā as per the hadith, "Of all mankind, I have the strongest claim to Jesus son of Mary" (*Anā awlá al-nās bi-ibn Maryam*).[116] The Mūsā-presence is thus a clean mirror that intensely reflects the Muḥammadan lights. His presence is like Mount Ṭūr (*Jabal Ṭūr*), and this is why it contains a variety of sciences and inner secrets. It is a disclosure-site of union and separation, and a manifestation-site of the two opposites (*maẓhar al-ḍiddayn*).

The one who possesses experiential taste (*dhawq*) always lives in unseen worlds and in the Lights of faith, and these presences grant an understanding of the taste of the secret upon the carpet of ecstasy in the presence of the heart. In whatever station you find yourself, you will taste of these

presences whether you are in the station of Lights (*anwār*) or Secrets (*asrār*). It is in the measure of your tasting of the Path of God that you will have understanding of the book of God.

The true knower of God deduces all things from nothing, and the one who receives and understands is not like the one who receives without understanding. The foundational principle we learn from this lesson is that a person's election is commensurate with the trial he endures (*ʿalá qadr al-ibtilāʾ yakūnu al-ijtibāʾ*). This is attested to by the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ, "The most sorely tried of all people are the Prophets, then those who follow them, then those who follow them."[117] In the case of Mūsā, peace be upon him, trials were ever-present in his life. The first trial with which God tried him was his killing of the Egyptian. Now, this killing on his part was an inspiration (*ilhām*) from God, and this is why he did not regret what he did, for he was a bearer of divine Law, which stirred within him in order to manifest the command of God. This was despite the fact that he did not know that what occurred to him was an inspiration, and therefore ascribed the error to Satan, as the verse says, **This is of Satan's doing**.[118] This concurs with his status of inerrancy (*ʿiṣma*).

Now in the course of the wayfarer's journey to God, when a Light of the Beloved ﷺ discloses itself to him, he recalls what he used to do in the past and comes to know how to distinguish between the deeds which arose from inspiration and those which came from his lower self. In order to teach us this, God brought Sayyidunā Mūsā together with Sayyidunā al-Khiḍr, peace be upon him, the father of the saints who drank from the water of life. During that encounter he became aware that his slaying of the Egyptian had been a lordly inspiration. For Sayyidunā al-Khiḍr reenacted the events that had befallen Sayyidunā Mūsā in his own past, so that he could see them with his own eyes. At

first he reproached al-Khiḍr for slaying the youth, until he told him that it was an inspiration from God: **I did not do so from my own command**.[119] This was to remind him of how he had slain the Egyptian. Herein lies a very important lesson regarding spiritual training (*tarbiya*) which we can learn from this blessed story: When the disciple finds a training, nurturing shaykh, he must recall his past, both the bad and the good, in order to prevent any self-admiration (*ʿujb*) from arising within him when the subtleties of truth (*laṭāʾif al-ḥaqq*) begin to unveil themselves before him. It is easy for Satan to play games with the disciple at this stage, when he is undergoing transformation from darkness to Light. The disciple may come to think of himself as something, or imagine that he has attained his goal, even though he is still only a beginner. However, if he recalls the sins of his past, this will shield him without doubt from self-admiration and pride. And when his resolve becomes strong and his Light grows, he will become like a foreigner in all of his movements, living with the Real and through the Real.

Sayyidunā Mūsā was the only one who could see Sayyidunā al-Khiḍr, and so no one else saw al-Khiḍr killing the youth. Thus al-Khiḍr essentially made Mūsā aware of his own inerrancy (*ʿiṣma*) by way of spiritual allusion (*ishāra*). Likewise, his puncturing of the ship corresponded to the ark into which Mūsā was placed and then cast into the ocean. This again was a return to his own past, so that he would remember it and thereby teach us that what appears outwardly to be destruction is internally salvation. The casting of Mūsā into the ocean was outwardly a form of destruction, while inwardly it was salvation. Likewise, the puncturing of the ship was outwardly destruction, but inwardly salvation from the king who was **seizing every ship by force**.

Moreover, the story of Sayyidunā Mūsā with his mother makes it clear that she was acting in accordance with revealed inspiration without being aware of it. A person's deeds might be in accordance with revealed inspiration from the Lord, yet they are unaware of it until they receive an opening and come to know their true situation. Likewise, when the mother of Mūsā, peace be upon him, cast her son into the ocean, it is as if she was telling him, "If great things are truly destined for you, then God will save you; and if not, then it makes no difference whether Pharaoh or the ocean slays you." By way of allusion (*ishāra*), this teaches us that the disciple benefits only when he directs himself towards the Lord with his entirety, seeking God Almighty. If he remains in a state of doubt, or puts one foot forward but not the other, he might be rejected even while imagining himself to have been accepted. We ask God for safety. The mother of Mūsā did not doubt or procrastinate—she took her son in his entirety and cast him into God's mercy, thus bringing together the two opposites through her own fear for Mūsā and her hope that God would return him to her. Likewise, dear disciple, fear for your heart from the darkness of other-than-God, and cast it into God's clemency, that He might return it to you filled with Lights and make you worthy of carrying the divine secrets. Cast your lower self into the ocean of realities and become absent from all other than God, and you shall attain proximity to the Lord.

Remember also that the first thing that God created after rest was motion, and through motion the entirety of creation was produced. So move too, that you might produce love, and that the door of yearning might open before you, so that you become truly alive even as you long for death. Learn the wisdom from all things in your life. When the mother of Mūsā believed in her Lord, He returned her son to her, and she came to know that what she had done was a fruit revealed

inspiration, just as Sayyidunā Mūsā learned the same through his encounter with al-Khiḍr. So seek the Khiḍr of your time, one who will bring together for you your past, your present and your future; one who will bring you out of all of that to somewhere beyond time and place.

12. The Flow of love (*Sarayān al-Ḥubb*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 18th Shawwāl 1435 / 15th August 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Know, dear seeker of the Real, may God illuminate your heart, that the nonexistent cosmos was made manifest with love. The cosmos was in a state of rest, a rest of non-existence (*sukūn ʿadamī*), and then the Real gazed upon it with love, and what was at rest began to move with love, by virtue of, "I loved to become known." And what was once at rest is still in motion, and the cosmos is still expanding. Nothing in existence moves except through the power of love, and for love's sake. A rock tumbles down from the top of a mountain to the bottom for the sake of love. Rain falls from the sky to the earth for the sake of love. The root of creation is the love of the pre-eternal. If His love did not flow through us, we would not have become manifest in the realm of possibility. The cosmos was manifest to the Real in pre-eternity, and He brought it into manifestation through His beginningless pre-eternal love. It is not as the philosophers say, that the world was engendered by accident.

Now in the beginning there were two gazes: a gaze from the Real toward creation, and a gaze from creation toward the Real. This is so that you know, O nonexistent one, that it is by the measure of the Creator's love for you that you love the Creator. He creates preparedness in you, and you come to love Him by the measure of your preparedness (*istiʿdād*). In a sacred hadith, God says, "My servant continues to draw near unto Me with supererogatory devotions (*nawāfil*)"[120] until his preparedness becomes strong, whereupon he attains God's bounty of "until I love him."

Reflect on His statement “until I love him,” and you will recognize that it is His love for you that comes first. **He loves them, and they love Him**.[121] He did not say, “until the servant loves Me,” because you play no part in it. The love that is attained through supererogatory devotions is a particular love (*maḥabba khāṣṣa*). As for the love that made all creation manifest, that is a universal love. The purpose of this beginningless and universal love is to attain knowledge of the Creator: **I did not create the Jinn or humankind except to worship Me**.[122] Ibn ʿAbbās, God be pleased with him, interpreted this to mean, “to know Me.” Worship is the Path, and knowledge is a subtle arrival upon the carpet of, “I loved to become known.”

Thus, when you come to know Him, you will have attained that particular love that lifts the veils from you. The illusion of your existence will be dispelled from you, that you may know His existence. The seeker passes away from spatial directions by virtue of, “Dear God place in my heart a Light, and on my tongue a Light, and in my hearing a Light, and in my seeing a Light, and place behind me a Light, and in front of me a Light, and above me a Light, and below me a Light, and O God, grant me light!”

When he becomes extinct to the spatial directions by virtue of this, the names and attributes are made manifest to him. This does not mean that they were not manifest before his extinction, but they were veiled from him by the overwhelming power of illusion. For they exist, whereas you and the cosmos are nonexistent.

Dear servants of God, the wayfarer attains love of the Real when his heart becomes permeated by the *tawḥīd* of the names and attributes, and the disclosures of the names and attributes flow over him. The names become manifest for him through their descent according to the *Lām* of Love and

yearning, which is the intermediary between the Real and the effect (*athar*). However, when you are dominated by the vision of the eye of union, you will attain nothing but bewilderment and obliteration, for when the Essence becomes manifest, the names, the attributes, the acts and the properties become hidden.

Now in the method of the Karkariya Order, the disciple is given the secret of union (*sirr al-jamʿ*), wherein the *tawḥīd* of the Essence comes first, so that shadowy separation passes from him. Then he drinks from the spring of the *tawḥīd* of the names and attributes in the second secret (*sirr*), until he returns to luminous separation, and advances through the perfections of love, which are endless.

When the cover of love is lifted for the wayfarer, he sees every motion as emerging from the flow of love within it. He directly experiences how the Light of inner vision becomes strengthened until it is united with the light of outer vision. When this happens, he sees nothing without seeing Light within it or before it. It is as if he sends to all beings a message of love, and they reciprocate the same love, because he sees within them the Muḥammadan Light. The Chosen One ﷺ loved the palm trunk on which he used to lean, and the trunk loved him in turn because he loved it first. There were many other palm trunks, but he singled out that particular trunk for a special distinction.

Now the human being, by virtue of being a vicegerent of God, was given by God the ability to craft. He loves the things he crafts, but they do not love him back, for that is a uniquely divine characteristic. This explains why the only actions a man usually attributes to God are supernatural deeds that go beyond the bounds of his intellect. As for the ordinary actions that occur by his own hands, he attributes them to himself and thus is veiled by them from his Lord. The knower of God sees every movement and deed as a

supernatural event (*khāriq lil-ʿāda*). So the Real creates, but it is attributed to the servant; and the flow of love is so powerful in the cosmos that creatures halt at their own selves and do not refer them back to their origin. As a result they are dominated by illusion, affirming the existence of their own selves while being oblivious to the secret of God's sustenance (*sirr al-qayyūmiyya*) which flows through all things. Some creatures are so intensely deluded that they affirm themselves and deny the Real; and these are the most veiled of all people.

When a seeker finds a training, nurturing shaykh, the first thing the shaykh does is dispel this illusion from him and nourish his essence with the Light of understanding. As for the heavily veiled one in whom the remnant of ego remains, it is difficult for him to understand these realities, which is why you find him betraying his covenant. Of all people, he is the most eager to affirm his own existence and to cling to illusion. Nor is this illusion exclusive to human beings, for the jinn suffer from it even worse, and affirm their existence even more stubbornly.

When you come to realize what illusion truly is, you will see that it is nothing at all. It is like a mirage, as God says, **As for those who disbelieve, their works are like a mirage in the desert that the thirsty man takes to be water, until he comes to it and finds it to be nothing; but he finds God there, and He pays him his account in full; and God is swift in reckoning. Or like the darkness of a deep sea, covered by a wave, above it a wave, above it clouds—layer upon layer of darkness! When he holds out his hand, he can scarcely see it. And he to whom God grants no Light, has no Light**.[123]

The spirit of this allusion brings out the fact that clinging to illusion is *kufr*, the cover of nonexistent reality (*al-haqīqa al-*

ʿ*adamiyya*). To us belongs direct witnessing (*shuhūd*), not existence (*wujūd*). If you only attained realization, you would find God there with you. But as long as your hearts are overwhelmed by the darkness of other-than-God, your insight will be sealed up and your Lights extinguished. **And he to whom God grants no Light, has no Light**. We ask God's protection from deprivation after bestowal!

So strengthen the Light of the Beloved in your heart until it becomes manifest in your eyesight, and you become like the thread of divine power which negates the effect and affirms the Real. You will not attain experiential taste of perfection until you attain knowledge of the *Kāf* of Virtue (*iḥsān*). Then the *Lām* of Longing (ʿ*ishq*) will become manifest for you, and reveal its secrets by virtue of perfect love.

13. The Breath of the All-Merciful (*Nafas al-Raḥmān*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 25th Shawwāl 1435 / 22nd August 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Know, dear wayfarer, may God assist you with His holy spirit, that the forms of possibilities were manifest in pre-eternity by virtue of the immutable entities (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*). Then the Real made them manifest in the realm of possibility through the inevitable disclosures of His names and attributes, which sought to manifest their own inevitable dictates and thus dressed them in the garb of existence though in truth they are nonexistent.

This was in order for the levels of existence to become complete, for although the cosmos was manifest in pre-eternity through His name the All-Encompassing, it did not become manifest in space except through the names and attributes. The names breathed out, and their properties became manifest through the essence of love. The Real directed a single gaze of love towards that stillness, and it was set into motion. Motion is love which grew in multiplicity from the configuration of the circles of yearning (*al-ʿishq*), which were generated from its center. Flowers have many colors, though they are nourished by the same water.

It is for this reason that all the forms in the realm of being are connected by love that flows between them. Al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ said, "The believer is the mirror of his brother."[124] Every form loves its sister because of the love that flows in it. This is as the Shaykh of our Shaykhs, Sayyidi

Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī, God be pleased with him, said in a poem,

There is no manifestation-site in the cosmos
Except that its secret is loved by another, even a grain of sand.

However, these things can be witnessed only by one whose heart is filled with the Light of the Real. Now since the names still continue to exhale this breath, the motion is perpetual, and the love goes on flowing, and the sites of cosmic manifestation alternate between effacement and affirmation (*maḥw* and *ithbāt*). The Beloved ﷺ alluded to this name-breathing when he said, "I feel the breath of the All-Merciful coming from Yemen."[125] So the Helpers (*Ansār*) were the breath of the All-Merciful, as though the name of the All-Merciful breathed out the nature of their kind. The meaning of breathing (*tanaffus*) here is to bring out and manifest what one has within. Through the Helpers, God blew strife and tribulation away from the Emigrants (*Muhājirūn*), as though the breaths of the Helpers were connected to the name of the All-Merciful and they became the locus of the divine mercy (*raḥamūt*).

Dear servants of God, when one of the names of the Real comes to reside in the heart, its luminosity flows through the entirety of the body, so that when that body breathes, it breathes through that name. This is why the breath of created being is of tremendous importance. Sayyidunā ʿAlī, may God ennoble his face, said, "When the knower of God speaks, we recognize him instantly." That is to say, when he breathes and the warmth of his breath and the circles of air come out, we recognize him at once by virtue of his breath. We know whether he is a man molded by the divine mercy (*Raḥmānī*) or not. We know whether he is a person of elevation or lowliness. ʿAlī went on: "And if he remains silent, we

recognize him by the end of the day," by virtue of observing his outward actions, because the outward speaks to the inward.

Now when the conscience (*sarīra*) of the gnostic becomes pure, his heart becomes a mirror for the disclosures of the names of the Real. He exhales breaths that are pure, spiritual, and elevated. That is why the Beloved ﷺ said of his noble Companions, may God be pleased with all of them, "My Companions are like the stars: whichever one you follow, you shall be guided."[126] This is because when the Muḥammadan sun reflected upon them, their hearts became stars and their bodily limbs took on the fragrance of the lights of following him, and their breaths were purified because they issued from the root of the luminous Primordial tree. The Light of al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ purifies animalistic hearts, so that the warmth of the in-blown spirit is emitted from them, and they exhibit Adamic sciences and Muḥammadan inner secrets that would dazzle anyone possessed of intellect. Such are the possessors of the star-breath (*al-nafas al-najmī*).

Consider how Sayyidunā Adam, peace be upon him, learned all the names through the in-blowing of the spirit, and when he exhaled he exhibited sciences and gnostic teachings. As for the heedless one, his breaths are lowly, the garb of his lower self evident upon them as they are emitted. This is why a warning was issued to the people of heedlessness, lest they be among those about whom the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "A man may utter a word that angers God, thinking nothing of it, and be condemned to Hell for it."[127]

So chose a Path for yourself and for your breath.[128] You can be an Adamic human being by virtue of the blowing of the spirit, which occurs when the properties of the spirit flow through the entirety of your body, such that your earth is

changed to other than the earth,[129] and you come to realize the essence of love described in the Sacred Hadith,

"My servant ceases not to draw near unto Me with supererogatory devotions until I love him; and when I love him, I become the hearing with which he hears, the seeing with which he sees, the hand with which he holds, and the foot with which he walks. If he asks Me, I will surely give him; and if he seeks refuge with Me, I will surely give him refuge."[130]

With this, you will be dominated by the Breath of the All-Merciful.

That is one Path; the other is for you to become a bestial human being by virtue of the dominance of your bestial body, so that the influence of the spirit weakens within you. With that, you will become ignorant of your reality, and you will not draw out the treasure that is buried within you. You are a composed book, a written history: the book of your life, is a record of all of your deeds, and all your movements, and all the words that issue from you. It is a record of your breaths, which issue from the warmth of the spirit. This breath issues from the star of caprice (*hawā*) in the heart, and then is exhaled so that it is loosened upon the tongue, and the tongue is set into motion and manifests all manner of wondrous sciences. So examine the nature of the star that has been sent down into your heart. Is it the star of the Companions, or a hellish base star from the depths of the devil? This breath is your reality.

Know too that the nobility of the place from which breaths are exhaled determines the nobility of the place where they arrive. This is because God made the mouth a symbolic reflection of the mansions of the moon, and so placed in it fourteen teeth above and fourteen below, so that it resembled the setting-places of the stars (*mawāqiʿ al-nujūm*).[131] The

tongue is set into motion between above and below, following the shape of the *Lām* of Love or the Singular *Alif*, according to your aptitude. When you are silent, you are in a state of stillness; but when the Real directs a gaze of inwardness towards you, your tongue is set into motion and your speech emerges in a manner commensurate with that gaze. Thus if He gazes at you with the *Hāʾ* of Identity, you will speak of annihilation and its properties, while if He gazes at you with the *Lām* of Love, you will speak of the centrality of al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. Your words will differ according to the name with which He gazes upon you. This is specific to the people of gnosis. As for the common believers, their speech does not surpass the level of the lower self. The people of gnosis have a share in the secret of "I become the tongue by which he speaks," from the aforementioned Sacred Hadith. Their speech is from the Real, through the Real, and to the Real. This is why from the warmth of their spirits are expressed words which continue to be attributed to them generation after generation, such as their poems and their teachings, because they are connected to the Everlasting (*al-Bāqī*). As for the speech of the heedless folk, nothing remains of it because it is a fiery coal from the touch of the devil.

So rectify yourself, may God have mercy on you. Rectify your heart so that you may be graced with a breath of the All-Merciful. But if you think that your worth is tied to your status, your wealth, your leadership or your worldly knowledge, you are delusional; for you are a thing of annihilation, bereft of existence. You must forget the lower world that is passing away, and be a servant of the Everlasting, the Beginningless. Whether you like it or not, and whether you know it or not, your breaths are all nothing but movements of love. The secret and the riddle, however, lies in the extent of its force, power and manifestation,

because all possibilities come to manifest through the Breath of love. There is nothing but the love that flows through the breath of the All-Merciful; yet you are blind, and do not see.

Seek the warmth of the spirit, the passionate love (ʿ*ishq*) of God, for the registry of words in the scrolls of the hearts differs from person to person. For some, they are written with letters of Light. For others, they are written with letters of the shadow of Light. The highest and most sublime of the luminous letters are the letters of the all-encompassing name *Allāh*, because the pronunciation of it issues from God and to God. Whenever you invoke His all-encompassing name, you inscribe sublime letters in your book. As for the all-encompassing name in its true reality, neither angel nor any other being can inscribe its reality nor its secrets. How can an ocean with no beginning or end be confined to writing?

If you understood the reality of breath, you would know that it was through the breathing of Adam that humanity became manifest, and that his breath is a part of the universal all-encompassing soul, the soul that was given the all-encompassing words, may God's peace and blessing be upon their possessor. His breaths continue to be manifested, and to manifest, for his words bear the secret of "Be!" (*Kun*). Do you not see how He decreed for one people to be in Hell, and so they died in a state of unbelief, and decreed for another to be in Paradise, so they died in a state of faith? Do you not see how he said "Be Abū Dharr," and indeed it was him?[132] If you do not understand this, I will illustrate it for you with a tangible example which you will certainly recognize and not deny: From time to time, you hear about scientific discoveries that were only made in the age of technology, yet the Prophet spoke about them fourteen centuries ago. That is because his words are not like other words: **He does not speak out of his whims; it is nothing but revelation being**

revealed.[133]

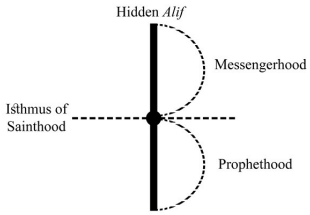
14. The Station of Interpretation (*Maqām al-Taʿbīr*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 2nd Dhū al-Qaʿda 1435 / August 29th 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

The Mūsā-presence continues to shade us with its teachings and shower us with its secrets. In reality, the wayfarer does not complete the study of the presences of the Prophets until he studies them through experiential tasting, through the levels of the all-encompassing names in their entirety. Yet he could never give them their rightful due. And since we have arrived through the *Hāʾ*-reading to contact with the *Alif*, we shall now speak at this level through the Mūsā-presence about the station of interpretation (*taʿbīr*). So let us begin, with God's aid.

The station of the Hidden *Alif* at the first reading of the *Hāʾ* of Identity is divided into the upper half, which pertains to Messengerhood, and the other half, which pertains to Prophethood. What remains is the isthmus-line of Sainthood, as illustrated below.



So the wayfarer enters into the gnostic sciences through the reading of the Name in the mode of witnessing, in accordance with the spirit of, **Read in the Name of your Lord**.[134] He reads in the Name of his Lord, which is the divine Name *Allāh*, through the door of the *Hāʾ* where the

secret of Identity is unveiled to him. Then he ascends until the Muḥammadan center becomes manifest to him and he disappears into it, until the *Lām* of Gnosis is disclosed to him. Then he is honored with the prostration of the spirit after he realizes the prostration of the heart in the first and second secrets of our Path, and he relinquishes all his claims to power, strength, taste or state, and he sees in himself nothing but deficiency. Then he ascends to the station of union, where he reads the empty space between the *Lām* of Gnosis and the Singular *Alif* of the divine Name *Allāh*.

This occurs when the beauty of the most beautiful names visits him and brings him close to its secrets. Then he is taken to the station of separation, where neither name, allusion or attribute attaches to him, and he journeys in the midst of separation until the breeze of union manifests to him through the Hidden *Alifs*, and he becomes attached to them until he comes into contact with the *Alif* where the isthmus of Sainthood is located, and he begins to journey therein.

Prior to this point, he was only combating the darkness of his lower self, erasing the forms of created things from his heart, and discovering the traps of Iblīs in order to avoid them. At this station, the station of the Hidden *Alif*, the gnostic arrives at the secret of interpretation and acquires the ability to interpret the exalted sciences on his outward tongue in such a way that everyone else understands. Before arriving at this station, his interpretation could oscillate between truth and error.

Now before achieving mastery (*tamakkun*) of the station of interpretation, when the wayfarer speaks of a matter of the unseen, that matter will remain a mystery to the listener because he has not seen what that wayfarer has seen. This is because the wayfarer is not able to provide the necessary interpretation. However, when he comes into contact with the *Alif*, he learns this by means of the descent of the subtle

graces of the prophets into his heart; for “the knowers are the heirs of the Prophets.”[135] The knowers of God are the vessels of prophetic knowledge, and so their tongues are worthy of conveying their teachings by the grace of the spiritual inheritance that passed from the Prophets into their hearts. This is because the ones who have the ability to make manifest hidden sciences in tangible forms are the Prophets. They are the ones who take the sublime sciences and bring them down to rest of creation, speaking with the outward tongue in a way that everyone is able to understand. Everyone takes from them in the measure of their ability, their station, their state and their experiential taste.

God says regarding the outward tongue of the Prophets that is understandable to everyone, **We never sent a messenger except with the tongue of his people**.[136] The companions, may God be pleased with them, understood the intended meaning of the words because it was in their own tongue. Yet there remained a variety of preparednesses in their hearts, which differed from companion to companion in accordance with the Light of gnosis of God that resided in their hearts. This is why the Prophet ﷺ said to them, alluding to their sanctity, “Let the one who is present pass it on to the one who is absent.”[137] The outward tongue is one and the same, but some understand it well enough to convey it exactly as they heard it from al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ to those who did not hear it. Then there are others who, in addition to understanding it, add another meaning as well. For such people, “the one who is present” takes on another meaning in the tongue of the elect, as follows: “O you who have pierced through separation and union, and joined together upon the Muḥammadan *Alif*, and thus witnessed what others have not, convey it to them, so they may join the people of witnessing (*ahl al-shuhūd*).”

So these companions, may God be pleased with them, are the centers, the stars that inherited the teachings of the sun of Prophethood. They were possessors of knowledge and understanding, and they drew from the Hidden *Alif* what they were able to draw, and conveyed it to those who were absent. In like manner, the one who attains that station among the saints (*awliyāʾ*) of his community, and receives authorization to interpret what has been unveiled to him, is also included in this prophetic hadith.

Now when the messengers addressed the common believers, they would be attentive to their station so they could understand them, for they knew that the elect would understand even their slightest gestures and allusions. Consider how the Prophet ﷺ used to divide the spoils in accordance with the knowledge, gnosis, love and resignation that had settled in the hearts of the companions. Thus he would give to the commoners rather than the elect. You would find him giving to them in order to win over their hearts, and out of fear for them lest they be cast into Hell if they disrespected the prophetic presence, whether outwardly or inwardly, such as the one who said to the Beloved ﷺ, "This division of spoils was not done purely for the sake of God"—God forbid! So he ﷺ would give to them in order to win their hearts over to Islam. For this reason, he would give the folk of true faith among the Emigrants and Helpers less than what he would give others. The same goes for the division of knowledge: he would speak in a way that was understandable to everyone, but it would descend into each individual's heart according to the degrees of the veils he had pierced through. This is why there was a hierarchy among the companions with regard to their knowledge and understanding, may God be pleased with them all.

Herein lies a bewildering and wondrous matter: a

companion could hear only a few words from the Master of prophets and messengers ﷺ, and that would be enough for him to taste all of the subtle teachings hidden within them. This is why it has come down to us that the companions would attain experiential taste from every movement, speech and allusion that issued from the pure prophetic presence. They went even further than that—consider how Sayyidunā ʿAbdullāh b. ʿUmar, God be pleased with him, would make his camel walk two circles over the place where the camel of the Beloved ﷺ circled. Or consider how al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ was once praying when he reached out his blessed hand in front of him to pick a bunch of grapes. Look for the companion who asked him when he ﷺ reached out his hand, if you have any Light.

The same thing happens in our Path: there are some to whom the Real gives much outward provision, and they are happy with it, but when it decreases they become upset. Then there are others who have bad etiquette inwardly when they notice that the world has opened its doors to someone else but closed its doors to him. This is why we tell you that the purpose of the Path is to rectify one's inward state. The Path guides you to the provision that does not run out. So do not turn towards anything but your goal and your desire. We say one thing, in one gathering, but each person takes from it according to the measure of their aptitude and luminosity. Before we speak, we have already sent down the meanings of our words into the hearts of our disciples as disclosures, visions, acts and properties. Whoever's preparedness and presence are strong enough will receive them. **And none receives it but one who is immensely fortunate**,[138] whose heart is connected to our heart, so that some of what is inscribed in ours is reflected in the mirror of his.

15. The Inheritance of the Prophets (*mīrāth al-anbiyāʾ*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 9th Dhū l-Qaʿda 1435 / September 5th 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Know, dear travelers to the presence of the Real, that the awesome Muḥammadan presence descended into the Mosaic manifestation-site and thereby the knowledge of the Hidden *Alif* was completed at this presence just as it was completed in the other presences. The saints of the blessed Muḥammadan nation thus have a share of this knowledge through their prophetic inheritance. They are heirs of the prophetic sciences because they occupy the center of the Hidden *Alif*. Arriving into contact with the *Alif* by reading the all-encompassing name is the beginning of Sainthood. Prior to that, the wayfarer is striving to purify the soul by disregarding it and realizing annihilation. God alludes to this inheritance in the verse: **We bequeathed the Book to those of Our servants whom We had chosen**.[139] Those are the true heirs who inherit divine knowledge. When God mentions the "scholars" (*ʿulamāʾ*) in His Holy Book, they are the people of divine knowledge who have realized the honor of the possessive relationship expressed by the words **Our servants**. Do not imagine that knowledge is a line that is inscribed in the heart or the mind through thoughts, and thus you become a scholar-saint. The Prophet ﷺ said: "The scholars are lamps upon the earth, vicegerents of the prophets, my heirs, and the heirs of the prophets."[140] The scholars are the lamps of the earth because their hearts are luminous; they are a clear Path whose night is as bright as its

day; heirs of the prophets by virtue of the descent of subtle graces upon their hearts.

The knowledge of al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ is a Light that God casts into the heart of whomever He wills among his servants. Through it, He removes the darkness of nonexistence, and clothes him with the robe of election. When he speaks, his speech is through God; and what he hears is from God. Consider how Sayyidunā ʿUmar, God be pleased with him, said: “Draw near to the mouths of the obedient, and listen to what they say, for truthful things are disclosed to them.” That is on account of their hearts’ proximity to God. The more a heart gains proximity to God, the more the contentions of evil pass away, and the Light of truth-unveiling becomes fuller and stronger. The more distant it is from God, the more contentions amass, and the weaker his Light of truth-unveiling becomes. For knowledge is a Light that God casts into the heart, through which the servant distinguishes between truth and falsehood. Luminous knowledge possesses a force that displays its treasures upon the mouth. This is why Imām Mālik said: “Knowledge is not through the abundance of reports. Rather, knowledge is a Light that God places in the heart.” So look at what is in your heart? Do not say: “how can I see it?” Close your eyes and you will see it; and if you do not find anything, then search for someone who will cast a Light upon the darkness of your heart, so that you may become among the people of Light, and begin your Path toward the inheritance of the Beloved ﷺ.

On his journey toward this knowledge, the wayfarer to God begins by entering into the *Hāʾ* of the Name in order to free himself from the darkness of the lower self. When he comes into contact with the *Alif*, he attains the knowledge of the prophets. He enters into contact with the *Alif* through a luminous handful that bestows upon him the power of

expression. For the prophets, peace be upon them, used to address the nations through the outward tongue that was understood by all people. But behind every word there is an intangible meaning and a delicate allusion that is only understood by the elite. Thus God tells us that Sayyidunā Mūsā said: **So I fled from you when I was afraid of you**,[141] though with respect to the revealed Law, fear of other than God is blameworthy, as God says: **That is only Satan, sowing fear of his friends. So fear them not, but fear Me, if you are believers**.[142] This means that if you only fear God, then you are a believer. Far be it for the prophets and their heirs to fear anyone along with God, for their hearts witness none but Him. However, God gave them an outward tongue, as we said, so that all people may take from them. For the outward expresses a partial manifestation-site of the inward, but the one whom God gives knowledge understands the intended meaning and knows that the inward is identical to the outward. Thus he draws from his outward to his inward, and from his inward to his outward.

16. The Shade of Lordship (*ẓill al-rubūbiyya*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 9th Dhū al-Qaʿda 1435 / 5th of September 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Know, may God illuminate your heart with His holy Light, that entering into the Hidden *Alif* allows the knower of God to witness the realities just as they are in their purity. By God's grace, we have already spoken a little about experiential tasting of the Hidden *Alif*. To complete what we started, it remains for us to further illuminate this presence by lifting the veil from some of the subtle graces of God's words, **So he watered their flocks for them, then turned toward the shade and said "My Lord, truly I am in need of any good that Thou may send down upon me"**.[143]

So we say, depending on God, that the greatest of the holy visions that dominated Sayyidunā Mūsā is the witnessing-site of lordship by virtue of his witnessing the Lights of the name the Lord (*al-Rabb*). He would very often turn to this name, as is evident in the Holy Book. One such instance was when he watered the flocks of the daughters of Sayyidunā Shuʿayb, peace be upon him, then withdrew into the shade by virtue of the holy witnessing of the disclosures of lordship, for the shade symbolized how he witnessed his own servanthood before the lordship of the Real. This is what the name of the Lord (*al-Rabb*) implies. Or you might say he withdrew into the shade where he could witness his nonexistence before the existence of the Real. The shade represents the reality of possibility, which can be witnessed though it does not exist. Glory be to the One who is Dominant over His servants! Or

you might say that when he, peace be upon him, attained realization of his attributes and his neediness, God gave him shelter beneath the shade of His Holiness, and there he found repose in supplication, and said, **My Lord truly I am in need of any good that Thou may send down upon me**.[144] With this, he displayed his perfect neediness upon witnessing the divine perfection. Note that he attributed his neediness to the good, even though in truth one is only in need of God. The difference is that these words sprang from his perfect realization; he witnessed the Lights of truth in the manifestation-sites of creation, and witnessed the One through which all things are sustained, so that all the other things he saw were as if nonexistent.

Some Qurʾān commentaries relate that with this supplication he was complaining of hunger, which leads us to another subtle point of discussion, namely that he was one of those in the station of with-ness (ʿ*indiyya*), which is attained by every servant who carries the supreme Name of God through experiential tasting and witnessing. This station is alluded to in the Sacred Hadith that tells of how God will say on the Day of Resurrection,

"O child of Adam, I was sick but you did not visit Me. He will say, "Lord, how could I visit you when you are the Lord of the worlds?" He will reply, "Did you not know that my servant so-and-so was sick, but you did not visit him? Did you not know that had you visited him, you would have found Me with him? O child of Adam, I asked you for food, but you did not feed Me." He will say, "Lord, how could I feed You when You are the Lord of the worlds?" God will respond, "Did you not know that My servant so-and-so asked you for food, but you did not give it to him? Did you not know that had you fed him, you would have found that with Me? O child of Adam, I asked you for water, but you did not

give me water." He will say, "Lord, how could I give You water when You are the Lord of the worlds?" He will say, "My servant so-and-so asked you for water, but you did not give it to him. Did you not know that had you given him water, you would have found that with Me?"[145]

This is why when Sayyidunā Shuʿayb, peace be upon him, heard about the supplication of Sayyidunā Mūsā from his daughters, he said, "He wants food." He concealed in his heart what he knew of the innermost secret that descended through the Light of those words. He knew of the inner state (*bāṭin*) of Mūsā, while his daughters knew of his outer state because they had seen his strength and trustworthiness. God tells us that they said, **O father, hire him. Surely the best man you can hire is the strong, the trustworthy**.[146]

By virtue of Sainthood, everyone who attains realization of the names of the Real inwardly will manifest the beautiful perfections of character and noble traits outwardly on his limbs. When the Real desires good for His servant, He causes him to dwell on the earth of servanthood upon the carpet of neediness. This is why all those wayfarers who have reached the *Lām* of Love or the *Lām* of Constriction, and upon whom His Lights have been disclosed and His secrets cast—all such wayfarers are in a state of total neediness, so that they see nothing but God's bounty upon them, and stake no claim in the matter for themselves. When they clothe themselves in acts of obedience, they feel as though they are foreigners in that clothing. When they receive gifts, they do not let those gifts distract them from witnessing the Giver. This is the meaning of courtesy (*adab*), the goodly earth from which beautiful character traits grow. It has been said that the Presence of the All-Holy has sworn that the people of the lower self shall not enter it, meaning those who attribute importance and value to themselves, thus assuming the

character traits of Iblīs, who said, **I am better than him**.[147] That way lies destruction and perdition.

Now Sayyidunā Mūsā displayed three characteristics to the daughters of Sayyidunā Shuʿayb: strength when he lifted the large rock that was placed over the well, trustworthiness when he completed his work in the most perfect manner and without turning to the daughters of Shuʿayb, and nobility and chivalry in how he did not ask for a wage in return for watering their flock even though he was in need of food. For this reason when Sayyidunā Mūsā, after having met with Sayyidunā al-Khiḍr, suggested that he take payment for rebuilding the wall, Sayyidunā al-Khiḍr refused to do so in order to remind him of how he had watered the flocks of the daughters of Sayyidunā Shuʿayb without asking for payment from them. It was as though al-Khiḍr met Mūsā with a reflection of his own past deeds. He punctured the ship as an allusion to the ark (*tābūt*) in which Mūsā was placed as a young child, and slew the youth as an allusion to how Mūsā slew Egyptian, and built the wall without any payment as an allusion to what we have just described. Similarly, the shaykh gives the wayfarer allusions that help him recall his past, for darkness is none other than the sum total of the murīd's past, and Light serves as a warning and alerts you so you do not forget your past and thereby fall from the station of gratitude.

The wayfarer must have a beautified vision accompanied by repentance that is sincere. The one who does not forget his past can easily accept everything that is directed at him from his shaykh, in contrast to the one who does not recall his past and his previous state of heedlessness, forgetting that it was only through the grace of God that he was brought out from the darkness into the Light and from heedlessness into wakefulness. The one who is in such a state of heedlessness will be surprised by the methods of training (*tarbiyya*) that

the shaykh utilizes on him. You find him asking for more before it is time, and belittling what he has been given, without realizing that he is belittling God's bounty upon him. The one who is in this state will continue to regress and grow ever more distant until he repents. When he does repent, he will find that all of the shaykh's directives are good for him, whether he gives or withholds, and whether he treats him with beauty or majesty.

As for the disciple who finds fault with his shaykh, he should know that he is finding fault with none other than himself, for the shaykh is the mirror of the disciple: each one sees his own state in him. In order to avoid being deluded by what he witnesses while inwardly critiquing the shaykh, the disciple should know that the shaykh of training can be either for him or against him, and so he ought to beware. He should know that the Light that enters the heart can be either for him or against him. If it is for him, he stands firm in obedience and avoids contradiction, with surrender and love, and so the Light will grow within him until it covers him completely and no trace or movement of him remains except through the Light. If the Light is against him, it enters his heart and finds his limbs still in a state of disobedience without repentance, and on top of that adds censure and criticism of things he has no knowledge of. In such a case, the Light will remain in his heart for one full year—one full celestial revolution—and then return whence it came. That is right, it will return to the heart of his shaykh, because the disciple did not give it its rightful due, nor measure it by its true worth.

Know also that we accept everyone who comes to us with a desire to know his Maker, regardless of whether they are lying or truthful. In the case of the liar, we pray that God realizes sincerity in him so that he may benefit, and we endeavor to help him return to the rightful Path, lest he be among those who perish. As for the sincere one, we pray for

God to make him firm in his sincerity, and we lead him on a journey through the worlds of Light. For if Light does not find a righteous locus, it departs. So clean out your hearts, God have mercy on you, through right intention, which is to seek the Face of God and nothing else, so that when the Light enters into the heart it obliterates all other than God from its field of vision.

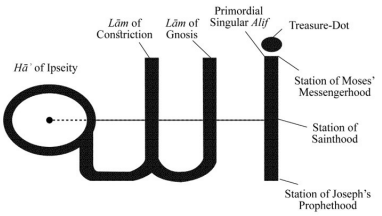
Let us return to the subject at hand. The encounter of Sayyidunā Mūsā with al-Khiḍr contains many benefits, subtleties and realities that can assist every seeker of the Face of God. It is not a story that you read in passing without contemplating. The Messenger ﷺ said, "God have mercy upon us and upon Mūsā! Had he been patient with his companion, he would have seen marvelous marvels. But he said, **'If I ask you about another thing after this, keep my company no longer.'**"[148] Because he ﷺ knew the wonders that al-Khiḍr would have unveiled for Mūsā, and only wished that Mūsā had been more patient with him out his ﷺ eager desire to see benefit for all God's servants. We also learn from the hadith that Sayyidunā Mūsā was the one who withdrew from the companionship of al-Khiḍr when he said, **"Do not be my companion;"** for when prophets make a statement, they adhere to what they say.

Let us conclude this discourse (*mudhākara*) by mentioning a vision that was sent down into the heart of one of the *fuqarāʾ*. When the shaykh speaks about one of the sciences or presences, the spiritual assistance descends into the hearts of his students with the pure meanings, subtle graces and realities of which he speaks. For this reason, those among you who are prepared witness these presences and receive them from the presence of the Shaykh. Now this vision descended into the heart of Aḥmad al-Hibrī, may God protect him.[149] Aḥmad al-Hibrī had a vision of Sayyidunā Yūsuf,

peace be upon him, who told him, “Go to the presence of Mūsā, do not come with me.” So when he went to the presence of Mūsā, a Light emitted from his noble heart and headed towards the heart of the al-Hibrī, and he began to circumambulate in it proclaiming God’s greatness, until it covered him entirely. Then he stopped seeing Sayyidunā Mūsā, peace be upon him, as if that Light had driven him far away. Then he recalled what Sayyidunā Yūsuf had told him, and he returned to the presence of Mūsā, but this time from behind not from the front, and followed him. This is the end of the vision.

So we are still in the Mūsā-presence. The disciple saw the Prophet of God Mūsā, and had we been in the presence of another Prophet, he would have seen that Prophet, may God bless all of them. He saw Sayyidunā Yūsuf, who represented the station of Prophethood, and he saw Sayyidunā Mūsā, who represented the station of Messengerhood, and he saw himself between the two, oscillating between one and the other, representing the station of Sainthood. When the Light came out of the heart of Sayyidunā Mūsā and entered into the heart of the *faqīr*, this represented drawing assistance from the wellspring of Messengerhood and Prophethood. The way it covered his body with Light until he no longer saw Sayyidunā Mūsā represented the transcendent meaning of what Sayyidī ʿAbd Salām Ibn Mashīsh said concerning the all-encompassing Muḥammadan presence, “Dear God, he is your all-encompassing secret pointing to You, and your supreme veil standing for You before You.”

We can summarize what we have said here with the following illustration of the reading of the Hidden *Alif* through the *Hāʾ*-reading in the levels of the all-encompassing Name, through the Mūsā-presence.



So Sainthood draws its isthmus-nature at the station of the *Alif*, while Prophethood and Messengerhood divide the *Alif* into two, as shown here, due to their tremendous importance. When the wayfarer arrives at the station of the isthmus of sainthood in the Hidden *Alif* through experiential tasting, he draws his knowledge from that prophetic inheritance, because the knowers of God are the heirs of the Prophets in words, deeds and states. They receive according to the measure of their preparedness through the descents of the subtle prophetic graces from the prophet or messenger unto the heart of the saint. Sainthood widens and expands as it absorbs knowledge, as illustrated below.

Thus the circle of Sainthood grows as it receives knowledge, until it includes the entire Name. May God enable us and you to attain realization, through His love and good pleasure, and may He bless Sayyidunā Muḥammad and his family and companions and give them abundant peace.

17. The Meeting of the Two Seas (*Majmaʿ al-Baḥrayn*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 16th Dhū al-Qaʿda 1435 / 12th September 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Our blessed Messenger ﷺ said about Sayyidunā Mūsā and al-Khiḍr ﷺ, "God have mercy upon us and upon Mūsā! Had he been patient with his companion, he would have seen marvelous marvels. But he said, **'If I ask you about another thing after this, keep my company no longer.'**"[150] Sayyidunā Mūsā, peace be upon him, marveled at everything that Sayyidunā al-Khiḍr showed him, namely making a hole in the ship, slaying the youth and building the wall. These three levels that al-Khiḍr displayed are the foundational principles of wayfaring to God: it is necessary to puncture a hole through the ship of one's habits, to slay the youth of caprice and the lower self, in order to obtain the treasure that is stored within you. "The one who know himself knows his Lord." Then one must build the wall, so that the secret is not manifest to anyone other than those who are qualified for it. This is why Sayyidunā Mūsā was placed in the company of Sayyidunā al-Khiḍr by divine command; for it was God who purified al-Khiḍr for the sake of his Confidant, as He says, **There they found one of Our servants whom we had granted mercy from Us, and taught him knowledge from Our presence**.[151] Despite this lordly purification of al-Khiḍr, it was Sayyidunā Mūsā who left the company of al-Khiḍr after he had broken the terms they had agreed upon. It is necessary and obligatory that prophets fulfill their terms, and al-Khiḍr had stipulated that

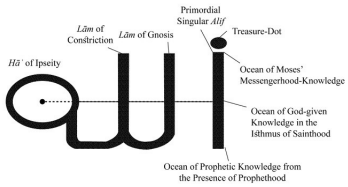
Mūsā follow him without asking any questions. So after passing through those three stages, the separation came, and in reality it was Sayyidunā Mūsā who asked for the separation when he said, “Keep my company no longer.”

Now al-Khiḍr knew that Mūsā was a messenger sent by God to his people, for it is narrated that when he arrived at Sayyidunā al-Khiḍr, Mūsā said, “Peace be upon you,” and he replied, “And upon you be peace, O Prophet of the Children of Isrāʾīl.” Then Mūsā said, “Who told you of my identity?” He replied, “The One who sent you to me.” Thus, each of them had knowledge that the other did not.

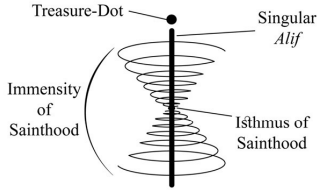
So the two seas met: the sea of messenger-knowledge (*ʿilm risālī*) in the form of Sayyidunā Mūsā, and the sea of God-given knowledge (*ʿilm ladunī*) in the form of Sayyidunā al-Khiḍr. That was the meeting of the two seas where they came together. Sayyidunā al-Khiḍr displayed his wonders while observing the proper courtesy that is due to the prophets. Thus, he would clarify that which was beneficial to the Confidant of God, who had been commanded to follow him. Together they constituted the perfection that occurs through knowledge of God within the circle of Messengerhood and the circle of Sainthood. This is why they never came together again after that. Note also that the Sainthood of a saint is lesser than that of a prophet. The properties of Messengerhood come to an end with the end of the herebelow, because the hereafter is an abode of recompense alone, and there will be no more work there. Those who follow the messengers in the herebelow will be among the felicitous in the hereafter, while those who do not will not be, and their fate will rest with God. As for the properties of Sainthood, they endure both in the herebelow and the hereafter, because Sainthood is an ascent through the knowledge of God, and knowledge of God has no end, whether in this life or the next.

Sayyidunā Mūsā was a Hidden *Alif* in his essence, and by virtue of his Messengerhood he claimed the upper half of the *Alif* above the isthmus of Sainthood, while by virtue of his Prophethood he claimed the lower half as well, and by virtue of his Sainthood he claimed the isthmus of the *Alif*. This is why he used to carry a staff, as an allusion to the Hidden *Alif*. Thus, by the authority of the Hidden *Alif*, he showed his people the twelve springs, as God says, **Then twelve springs gushed forth from it**.[152] He quenched their thirsty hearts with twelve letters corresponding to the letters of *lā ilāha illā Allāh*, and each people knew their drinking place. The goodly and exalted utterance of *lā ilāha illā Allāh* begins with the letter of the spirit, *Lā*, representing the inability to know Him and bewilderment in Him.

What follows is an illustration to clarify how the widening of the circle of Sainthood within the Hidden *Alif* takes place, through a reading from a different angle of the vision of the *faqīr* who encountered the spirit-presences of Sayyidunā Mūsā and Sayyidunā Yūsuf, as we discussed last week. Let us draw the name as usual:



Now here is an illustration of how the circle of Sainthood broadens in the Hidden *Alif* from the isthmus-dot in its middle, broadening upwards and downwards.



The wayfarer ascends until he arrives at contact with the

Alif by virtue of the *Hāʾ*-reading, then settles in the isthmus-point of Sainthood. The one who reaches this point must build a wall, and once he has thoroughly built it, he will be granted a Hidden *Alif*. As for arriving at the Primordial *Alif*, that occurs after reading every letter of the divine name through all ten readings.

18. Pharaoh's Question (*Suʾāl Firʿawn*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 8th Dhū al-Ḥijja 1435 / 3rd October 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Dear wayfarer, may God grant you success, know that the station of name-vicegerency or Adamic vicegerency is God's most noble gift to the elect members of the children of Adam, and that the prophets, peace and blessings be upon them all, used to ask God for outward vicegerency just as they had it inwardly by virtue of their Sainthood. This is because they knew that the rank of Messengerhood and Prophethood may come with outward vicegerency, or may not. God tells us in His Holy Book that Sayyidunā Mūsā said, alluding to the blessings God had granted him, **My Lord granted me authority and placed me among the Messengers**.[153] His words **My Lord granted me authority** alludes to vicegerency, while **and placed me among the Messengers** alludes to his Messengerhood.

The vicegerent on behalf of God is endowed with the sword, resolve, Sainthood and authority in outward and inward matters through all the levels of the religion. As for the messenger, this is not necessarily so, for not every messenger is a vicegerent. His only task is to deliver the message with which he was sent. God says, **Those who convey God's messages and fear Him, and fear none but God; and God suffices as a reckoner**.[154] However, if he carries a sword then he is a vicegerent messenger. Sayyidunā Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him, also requested this vicegerency before him when he said, as God tells us, **My Lord, grant me authority and bind me to the righteous**.[155]

In the station of Sainthood there are those who are appointed as vicegerents on earth, and also those who only have inward vicegerency. When common people hear the words “messenger” or “prophet,” may peace and blessings be upon them all, they tend to see them as possessing all of these stations and levels, but in fact the one in whom all of them were combined was the all-encompassing essence who was granted the all-encompassing words, our Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

As for the Pharaoh’s question to Sayyidunā Mūsā, peace be upon him, concerning the Lord of the worlds, it was not posed out of ignorance of the rank of Lordship. Moreover, he made his claim to divinity despite knowing inwardly that he was neither a god nor a messenger. The clearest evidence of this was the occasion when his people came to him complaining that the Nile had dried out and asking him to make it flow again. He promised them that the next morning he would go out to see the Nile and to work to restore its flow. That night, that matter kept him awake, and he tossed and turned not knowing what to do or how to get out of it. He had finally met his match, though he had once believed that there was nothing he could not do. The next morning, the people gathered to see how Pharaoh would cause the great Nile to flow once more. Hours passed and they waited, until finally he came out in all his adornment with his entourage of servants, throne-bearers, doctors, poets, sages, astrologers, dream-interpreters and all the rest. When they arrived at the bank of the Nile, he stood there pondering, and then noticed a spot where the reeds had grown tall, and commanded his throne-bearers to go there. Then he descended from his throne and ordered his entourage and guards to stay put, and for no one to go into the reeds with him.

So he went in alone, and when he was sure that no one else was there, he took off all his aristocratic garments,

adornments and jewels, and removed his sandals. Then he stepped towards the Nile until his feet were in the mud, and prostrated upon the earth and said to God, “O God, You know that I know that there is no God but You, so cause the Nile to flow!” So God responded to his prayer, and He caused the Nile to flow. Nor should this be any cause to marvel, for even Iblīs called out to God and God answered his prayers: **Iblīs said, “My Lord grant me respite until the day they are resurrected.” He said, “Very well, thou art among those granted respite, till the Day of the Moment Known”** .[156]

Thus Pharaoh’s motive behind his question to Sayyidunā Mūsā was to test him, for of all people Pharaoh knew Mūsā best. Whenever the story of Pharaoh and Mūsā is told, the notion always comes to our minds that they were enemies, because we only remember the time when Mūsā was sent to Pharaoh’s people. We forget that Pharaoh was the one who raised Mūsā in his own palace, and knew him well. So Pharaoh tested Mūsā with his question in order to see whether Sayyidunā Mūsā really knew God or was only claiming to do so. Pharaoh knew that the messengers have a lofty status when it comes to knowledge of God. Likewise, he also posed the question in order to test the faith of the others who were present.

So he said, **And what is the Lord of the worlds**[157] Now this is an impossible question to answer, because it inquires after the very essence of the Real, which the created human intellect cannot perceive at its core. Thus, Sayyidunā Mūsā did not answer his question, nor did he say, “How can I answer your question about the One who has no likeness?” Pharaoh knew that his question had no answer, and he knew that Sayyidunā Mūsā would not answer his question except by referring to God’s attributes: **Pharaoh said, “And what is**

the Lord of the worlds?" He said, "The Lord of the Heavens and the Earth and what is between them, would that you were certain."[158] He responded only by referring to God's Lordship over the worlds, yet tucked within his answer was an ingenious allusion to the innermost secret of the Essence. If Pharaoh and those with him had pondered it, they would have perceived the answer.

After contemplating the heavens and the earth, the servant arrives at, **You did not create this in vain, Glory be unto You**.[159] With that he arrives at knowledge of Lordship, and roams through nonexistence above in the heavens, and below in the earth until he arrives at certainty (*īqān*): **would that you were certain.** He roams with his inner vision, by the Light of the Real, through all that has a beginning and an end, in order to directly taste the transcendence of the One who has no beginning or end. If numerals in mathematics are infinite, what is one to say of the One who brought numerals into existence? This explains the prophetic prohibition of contemplating the Essence of God and the command to contemplate His signs. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Contemplate God's graces; do not contemplate God."[160] Or another narration, "Contemplate God's creation; do not contemplate God, lest you perish." You would perish because the Essence obliterates, effaces, extinguishes, bewilders and totally annihilates. To contemplate creation is to contemplate the attributes through the innermost secret of God's absolute sustenance after attaining realization through direct witnessing of one's own nonexistence. This is why God in his Holy Book directs us to two Paths for attaining the innermost secret of union and direct witnessing after tasting the annihilation of created things, saying: **We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that He is the Real**.[161]

Thus the easiest Path is to seek within the soul, because that grants a stronger and more complete knowledge of God. Within the soul the knower of God attains realization of what is narrated in the tradition: “My earth and my heavens do not encompass Me, but the heart of my believing servant encompasses Me.” This knowledge, then, is built upon direct witnessing of the levels of the singular name *Allāh* and the discovery of its concealed secrets and realities.

As for the second Path, it is to seek in the horizons in order to attain direct knowledge of the Real. This is a Path that has many branches, and the furthest extent one can reach via this Path is knowledge of the pure meaning and realities of the name of *al-Raḥmān*. God says, **al-Raḥmān mounts the Throne**.[162]

Both Paths require a nurturing training shaykh of inner insight and direct knowledge of the stations and levels, because from beginning to end it is a Path of experiential tasting, not intellectual exercise. Relying upon the intellect alone will not get you anywhere. This is assuming that you stay upon the shores of safety; for most of the anthropomorphism that creeps into the hearts of God’s servants is caused by the equivocal terms mentioned in the Holy Book which stand between necessity and possibility, such that you imagine Him in a physical bodily form whenever you hear such verses as, **When your Lord comes with the angels row upon row**.[163]

The levels of human understanding differ, which is why some people believe in the seven heavens, while others only believe in what they see and directly witness. The hadith about God descending to the lowest heaven is an allusion to Lordship above, and at the same time it opens the door of receptivity for the one who is incapable of visualizing the existence of the seven heavens. In wayfaring, the more this

star shines in your heart, the more you will know that you are among the people of the last third of the night. You are in your entirety a night, and when the star of al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ arises in your heart, that is the last third of the night in which the Real descends. When the Lord descends, He descends by virtue of love in the first level of the heart. When that happens, know that you are close to the sun gnosis, and that your day is nigh.

19. Mūsā's Answer (*Jawāb Mūsā*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 16th Dhū al-Ḥijja 1435 / October 10th 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Know, dear wayfarer, that Pharaoh was a man of knowledge, which is why when he posed his question to Sayyidunā Mūsā, peace be upon him, his intention was to incapacitate him by asking him about the quintessence of the Real, which cannot be expressed in word or by allusion. So he said, **And what is the Lord of the Worlds?**.[164] But the Mūsā-wisdom answered him in a way that neither he nor anyone else could refute, and so he responded to him by reference to something he recognized by alluding to relational Lordship; for the level of Lordship is receptive to addition. Thus, he approached the answer from the higher horizon of the heavens, and the lower horizon of the earth, and spoke to him of the Lordship as it relates to elevation and lowness, thus directing him towards the manifestation-sites in the hope that he would recognize the Manifest therein. So he said, **He is the Lord of the heavens and the earth**.[165] Pharaoh knew what Mūsā was talking about, but he wanted to display to his people that his argument was more powerful, forgetting that the conclusive argument belongs to God. Moreover, he had already known that Sayyidunā Mūsā would not answer him concerning the reality of the Essence, but would answer him concerning the manifestation-sites of the names and attributes, for the Essence is unknowable except through the sum total of the names and the attributes. Thus, his answer contained allusions that would stir anyone in whose heart is the Light of *tawḥīd*, which is why the

Confidant of God said, **Would that you were certain**.[166] Certainty is one of the fruits of divine unveiling: if you experience an unveiling, you will behold, through sheer faith and the realities of certainty, the reality of the nonexistence of all entities.

Pharaoh was one of the forms of misguidance, and his knowledge was pure heresy because he did not obey and follow the Prophet of his age. When he feared that his people might understand the answer of Mūsā, he quickly responded by saying to those around him, **Do you not hear?**[167] as if to make fun of the Confidant of God. Then after he had spoken to him of Lordship as it relates to the horizons, he spoke of Lordship as it relates to the soul: **He said, "Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers of old"**;[168] for a person may be heedless of his surroundings, but he will certainly not be heedless of his own soul and essence. It was as if he were telling him that this name-disclosure, which is witnessed in the outward manifestation-sites, is also occurring to you, for were it not for these disclosures you would have no manifestation, and you would not have been brought out of nonexistence into possibility. Then Pharaoh responded, speaking to his people, **Truly your Messenger who has been sent to you is possessed**.[169] With this, he wanted to conceal the realities out of fear that they may become obvious to those around him, and they may be brought out from the idolatry of illusion to the Light of understanding. So Mūsā the Confidant of God added, **The Lord of the east and the west and whatsoever is between them**;[170] for the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, and if it were not for the sun, everyone would remain in darkness. The allusion here is as if he were saying: Were it not for the sun of the Essence, the effect of the names and attributes would not have manifested, because all is folded within it and is non-

manifest until the sun of God's Exclusive Oneness becomes manifest. Were it not for that sun, everything would remain in the darkness of nonexistence. We said of this in a poem of ours,

My sun has risen from my inner heart,
until it manifested the hidden aspects of my being.

He then said to Pharaoh and his people, **If you understand**.[171] Here, the language of his discourse changes: after having been addressed to the presence of the heart through unveiling that yields the fruit of certainty, now it is addressed to the presence of the intellect, as if saying, "If you are people of delimited intellect, not non-delimited heart." This is why it was appropriate for him to speak to them of the heavens and the earth in the presence of the heart, because that is the presence of non-delimitation. Then in the presence of intellect, he delimited them to the east and the west specifically, because that is the presence of delimitation. Delimitation and non-delimitation are analogous to immanence and transcendence, and neither can be detached from the other.

It is for this reason that before the Essence's sun of oneness rises upon the wayfarer in our Path, he must first bring together the seven heavens, the seven earths, the pedestal and the throne, in one single glimpse. This is in order for him to pass away from himself and from everything else and to obtain the innermost secret. Moreover, it is through this secret that he opens the meanings of *tawḥīd* that his intellect was unable to access. In the *dhikr*, the disciple witnesses the primordial Light of the Essence. Once you have grasped this luminous reality, trust in God so that you may come to know Him in both delimitation and non-delimitation.

Now this conversation that occurred between the Confidant

of God and Pharaoh manifested the heresy of Pharaoh, because he knew well who Sayyidunā Mūsā was due to having raised him. Likewise, our master the Confidant of God knew Pharaoh very well. Pharaoh had an understanding of the teachings of Mūsā, but his understanding revolved around the axis of heresy, not emulation. This is why when Mūsā clarified to him that no created thing is excluded from the secret of God's sustenance, Pharaoh's raging jealousy was aroused and he wanted to possess the center of the *Hāʾ*-circle. So he told Mūsā in all arrogance and stubbornness, as God tell us, **Truly if you take a God apart from Me, I shall place you among the imprisoned**.[172] It was as if he were saying to him from upon the carpet of his fraudulent egoism, "I too know the very thing you do, and the forms of me and of you are a single entity, which has become multiple just as the number one is multiplied throughout all the other numbers. And I also know that I have complete control and dominance over you." That is why he threatened to imprison him, so that the truth would not be revealed. Pharaoh knew of the oneness of union (*tawḥīd al-jamʿ*) with knowledge of certainty, but he claimed it for himself. He did not submit to the message of Mūsā, but continued to follow the heresy of his own intellect. Thus knowledge alone without faith does not benefit, while sound knowledge built upon direct experiential tasting leads to the reality of faith. This is why you see that most Pharaohs are people of knowledge, especially knowledge of astronomy (*ʿilm al-falak*), yet despite that many of them are disbelievers.

As for the Pharaoh of Mūsā, he was aware of the essence of union (*al-ʿayn al-jamʿiyya*), so Mūsā said to him, by way of explanation and clarification, "Pharaoh, you cannot veil me from the essence of union by threatening me with prison." For Mūsā had drunk from the union of union, from the pure

waters of the station of the truthful ones, from the Blessed Tree. This is why the disciple must not forget the Blessed Tree, lest he perish and his knowledge become heresy and distance from God. Consider how the Antichrist (*Dajjāl*) will not benefit from his knowledge, because he will deny the Tree of Messengerhood and Sainthood, despite his knowledge of it.

So Pharaoh knew of the Oneness of God, and whenever he found himself in difficulty he would resort to it, as it happened when he supplicated to God for the Nile to flow, and God caused it to flow again, thus breaking the habitual course of nature. Likewise, the Dajjāl will break the habitual course of nature, and the treasures of the earth will flock to him, and he will show people Heaven and Hell and bring down rain for them. But all of these will be wisdoms and lessons, so that a person may cling to his covenant with al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ, the root of the Tree. The truly deprived one is the one who is cut off from the replenishment and assistance of the wellspring of al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ, even if the *Alif* of God's charismatic gifts (*karāma*) manifests upon him.

Pharaoh himself had great status among his peers, and was a man of knowledge, insight and intelligence, but his stubbornness made him a heretic. He offended against the station of Mūsā, which is why Mūsā wanted to make him seem weak in front of his people by presenting him with a categorical demonstration of his argument. God tells us that Sayyidunā Mūsā said, **And if I bring you something manifest?**,[173] to which Pharaoh replied in all arrogance, **Bring it then, if you are among the truthful**.[174] If Pharaoh had said to Mūsā, "No, do not bring it," he would have revealed his fear and shown the people what was inside of him, and been forced to acknowledged the truth of the message of God's Confidant.

God says, **Then he incited his people to levity, and they obeyed him. Truly they were an iniquitous people**.[175] He convinced them to make light of Moses because of their poor understanding of God and because of his dominance over them, so that they obeyed him in their iniquity and disobedience to God. All of this veiling that occurred to them was precisely a result of their dependence upon their intellects. The one who depends on his intellect to know his Lord depends on something that is created just like himself, and the created is incapable of perceiving the Creator, Exalted and Hallowed is He! Had they only followed the commanding spirit (*al-rūḥ al-amriyya*) and the supreme intellect (*al-ʿaql al-akbar*), they would have attained experiential unveiling and certainty of eye-witnessing from the quarry of realization.

So when Pharaoh accepted Mūsā's, peace be upon him, offer to bring something clear and manifest for him, **Mūsā cast his staff, and behold, it was a serpent manifest**.[176] He cast the staff of the lower self, by which Pharaoh had disobeyed[177] the reality of the divine command (*al-ḥaqīqa al-amriyya*), and it became a mirror for him and showed him a manifest serpent in the realm of forms, depicting the lower self of Pharaoh, which disobeyed the station of Lordship. The serpent was clear and evident, and so Mūsā brought them something that they could recognize, and the staff turned into a serpent. Had Pharaoh obeyed Mūsā, his sins would have been forgiven. This staff, which was an allusion to a Hidden *Alif*, was itself borne by a Hidden *Alif*, namely Mūsā. The divine authority manifested in the staff because divine authority was its primordial quiddity. Sometimes it manifested as a serpent, sometimes as a staff. It was as if he were making Pharaoh aware that he, Mūsā, was the possessor of the center and secrets, not Pharaoh. So when Pharaoh

brought forth the magicians, the staff swallowed the other staffs which were snakes, and no trace was left of their staffs, nor their snakes, while the staff of Mūsā remained as it was in the beginning, without changing. Thus the Prophet of God Mūsā was victorious, and his conclusive argument was made manifest, and the magicians came to realize the true status of God's Confidant, and so believed in him and what he brought, and prostrated to God. With that, they gained elevation and honor.

As for Pharaoh, God appointed him a vicegerent in the outward realm by disclosing Himself to him through the name He Who Harms (*al-Ḍārr*). He was a harmful, tyrannical, stubborn ruler who enslaved his own people despite having knowledge. All of this is in order to understand the Hidden *Alif*, for if you cast the staff—the Hidden *Alif*—upon a person and you see his sins become manifest upon him, this means he is a harmful tyrant. But if his beautiful characteristics manifest upon him, this means he is an obedient believer. It is a mirror that discloses things in the realm of possibility, things that are hidden and non-manifest in the realm of necessity.

20. The Everlasting Prostration (*al-sujūd al-abadī*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 29th Dhū al-Ḥijja 1435 / 24th October 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

Know, dear loved ones, that there is no end to the wonders of God's word. Its graces are never cut off, its virtues are innumerable and its secrets are incalculable. So taste with me, may God have mercy upon you, the sweetness of His words, **Then were the sorcerers cast down prostrating,**[178] so that you may be sprayed by the mist of the ocean of the tremendous Qurʾān.

When the sorcerers recognized the truth and the veil of illusion vanished from the vision of their hearts upon the carpet of annihilation, they turned from the fire of distance to the garden of proximity. Their deeds, which had previously issued from the lower self, came to issue from God. Note how when they performed their deeds through the lower self, the Qurʾān attributed the act to them, as follows: **So they cast their ropes and staffs and said, "By the might of Pharaoh we shall surely be the victors,"**[179] with the verb attributed to them. However, when they attained realization of witnessing and became extinct from directions and limitations, God attributed the act to Himself, thus: **The sorcerers were cast down prostrating.**[180] Initially, they affirmed the act to themselves because of how densely veiled they were and how blinded their inner vision was, but when they came to directly taste the reality of sincerity and ascended to the pulpit of deliverance, their deeds became the act of another. This is why God describes the two states differently, even though in

reality the Doer and Chooser of both is one and the same. This is the secret of the particular love that God bestows upon whomever of His servants He wishes. It is to taste pure servanthood by passing away in the Worshipped One (*al-maʿbūd*). It is one of the life-breaths (*nasama*) of the ones made sincere (*al-mukhlaṣūn*); the ones who are cloaked in deeds and yet are as strangers in that cloak. This is why they bore tribulation patiently and stood firm despite the hardships that descended upon them.

May God bless the sage of the Sufis Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī, God be pleased with him,, who said in his book entitled "Abandoning Self-Governance" (*Isqaṭ al-tadbīr*),

"Know that when the Real desires to strengthen a servant to withstand whatever fate He wills to send upon him, He furnishes him with the presence of His authority, adorns him with the Lights of His attributes, and cloaks him in His own qualities. The Lights will already have come to him, and so he will be through his Lord, not through his self, and will be strong enough to bear those burdens. The inrushes of Light are what helps them bear the decrees of fate."

If you wish, you could say that what helps them bear the divine decrees is the opening of the door of understandings. Or one might say that what helps them bear the tribulations are the inrushes of divine bestowals. Or if you wish you could say that what strengthens them to bear His decrees is the direct witnessing of God's beautiful choosing. Or you could say that what gives them patience in the face of divine wisdom is their knowledge of His knowledge. Or you could say that what grants them patience in the face of what occurs to them is their knowledge that He sees. Or you could say that what grants them patience in the face of God's actions is the manifestation of His beauty upon them. Or you could say that what grants them patience in the face of His foreordainment is their knowledge that restraint bequeaths

God's good pleasure. Or you could say that what gives them patience to bear with the divine decrees (*aqdār*) is the parting of the veils and the curtains (*astār*). Or you could say that what strengthens them to bear the weight of religious accountability (*taklīf*) is the inrushes of the inner secrets of His control (*taṣrīf*). Or you could say that what grants them patience in the face of His decrees is their knowledge of what He deposited in them by way of His subtle graces and goodness. These then are ten causes which enable the servant to have patience and to stand firm before the decrees of his Master when they occur; and He is the One who bestows in all of that through His grace.

As for the question of why the act of Sayyidunā Mūsā, peace be upon him, is described in the Qurʾān in the active form, **He cast his staff**, ascribing the act to his own noble presence, it is due to a secret relating to the divine realities that cannot be divulged here. The most that can be said is that the deeds of Sayyidunā Mūsā were produced from the presence of subsistence in God (*al-baqāʾ biʾLlāh*) through the realization of the station of with-ness.

As for the magicians, when they witnessed God's subtle graces and experienced true direct witnessing of the Lights of subtle divine grace that flows through every abandoned object, they said in the spirit of reliance on God from upon the carpet of good pleasure, **It is no harm; truly unto our Lord we shall return.**[181] They said this after Pharaoh had threatened them with execution and terrible torment, for he had been made dominant over them by the law of kingship; he was manifestation-site of the All-Compelling, the Giver of Harm, and he transgressed his boundaries and sinned, as God tells us: **He said, "Do you believe in Him before I give you leave? He is indeed your chief who has taught you sorcery. But soon you shall know. I shall cut off your**

hands and your feet from opposite sides, and I shall surely crucify you all."[182]

Everything has a price, and the price of proximity and gnosis is to sell one's soul to God. The more you ask for precious pearls, the more you should prepare for successive trials. A hadith tells us that the Prophet ﷺ said,

"The greater the compensation, the greater the trial; and the most beloved unto God are the ones who are tried the most. The one who is content shall have contentment, and the one who is displeased shall have displeasure."[183]

Is there anyone among you who has sold his belongings and his soul to God? Is there anyone among you who has abandoned the lower world and taken God as his intimate Friend? Or is it that when a trial befalls one of you, he frowns, and when he speaks to others a great calamity occurs when his words reveal his displeasure at God's decree? So be alert, for the time of trial is when a person is either exalted or abased.

Observe the perfected faith of the sorcerers and the elevation of their state. Despite the Lights of guidance that dwelled in their hearts and the expansion they attained, they did not transgress the boundaries of courtesy (*adab*). They were submissive to the divine Majesty, and when they asked for forgiveness, they asked it in a state oscillating between hope and fear. God tells us that they said, **Truly we wish that our Lord will forgive us our sins for our having been the first of the believers**.[184] The word "wish" (*ṭamaʿ*) here is used to express the sense of uncertainty (*ẓann*), and this unqualified uncertainty is a display of courtesy with God, a feeling that is fused between hope and fear, desire and awe. You hope that your wish will be granted, and you also fear that it might not be. Herein lies the reality of courtesy with God, for He does what He will, and His mercy is dominant.

The sorcerers were not deluded, nor did they fall into pride because of the divine knowledge God granted them, as Iblīs did. This is what the state of the knower of God should be: he should always suspect himself, and view the Lights and secrets God has granted him as being foreign to him, something for which he deserves no credit. When he looks at himself with the eye of suspicion, he will fear God; and when he looks at God's grace upon him, he will feel hope, because God would not have graced him with them if He had not wanted to give to him in order to make him thankful.

As for their words, **for our having been the first of the believers**, this was due to how they had gazed into the mirror of Mūsā, for the believer is the mirror of his brother. The pure meanings of faith were imprinted upon the scrolls of their hearts when His realities and Lights disclosed themselves to them through Sayyidunā Mūsā, and they witnessed them directly in accordance with their preparedness. The primacy of faith had always been Mūsā's since pre-eternity, as God says,

And when Moses came to our appointed meeting and his Lord spoke to him, he said, "My Lord, show me that I may look upon Thee." He said "Thou shall not see me, but look upon the mountain. If it remains firm in its place, then thou shall see me." And when his Lord manifested Himself to the mountain, He made it crumble to dust, and Moses fell down in a swoon. And when he recovered he said, "Glory be unto Thee! I turn unto Thee in repentance, and I am the first of the believers."[185]

The sorcerers partook in this through the grace of emulation; for every quality attained by a follower is credited to the one he follows. Hence, what the Confidant of God said after he woke up from the swoon of the disclosure was later said by his followers after the descent (*tadallī*) of the divine

presence.

The Almighty also tells us in His Book that the sorcerers said to Pharaoh,

We shall never prefer you to the clear proofs that have come to us, by the One who originated us! So decree what you would decree. You only decree in the life of this world. Truly we believe in our Lord, that He may forgive us our sins and the sorcery that you compelled us to perform; and God is better and more lasting.[186]

This was due to the perfection of their direct knowledge of their Lord, and their firm-footedness in the perception of the levels of existence. Thus they said, **We shall never prefer you to the clear proofs**, O Pharaoh, for there can be no denial after the clear proof of witnessing. Then **by the One who originated us** was an oath sworn on the divine creative power, from which no created thing in the circle of the realm of possibility is excluded. This was so that perhaps Pharaoh might wake up and renounce his egoism. **So decree what you would decree**, for we are content with God's decree and design for us. **You only decree in the life of this world**,[187] for you possess a level that we do not in the herebelow, namely authority and vicegerency through the tyranny of the sword.

Thus in a sense Pharaoh was correct when he said, **I am your exalted lord.** He was correct with respect to their experiential taste of faith, not in the sense of his own deficient understanding of the essence of union. That is, he was correct on the level of lordship that is attributed to the created being, in the sense that you speak of the lord of a family (*rabb al-usra*), or the lord of a house (*rabb al-bayt*), or the lord of a work (*rabb al-ʿamal*, or a "boss" in Arabic). Consider also the hadith about the lost she-camel, wherein the Prophet ﷺ said, "Until its lord finds it," meaning its

owner. In this sense Pharaoh was the lord of the kingdom over which he ruled. This is why the sorcerers said, **You only decree in the life of this world**, because they knew that his authority in view of his level as a temporal entity would not last. Rather, it was nothing other than a disclosure of the Living, the Sustaining. And since the sorcerers had drunk from the cup of *tawḥīd*, they knew that Pharaoh had corrupted realities, and so they understood that there can be no changing God's words, and that there was no avoiding their punishment at Pharaoh's hands. This is because the cosmic forms of nonexistence are in reality words spoken by God.

To this effect, the people of knowledge spoke the truth when they said that the cosmos is a silent Qurʾān, and the Qurʾān is a speaking cosmos, and the Prophet ﷺ is a walking Qurʾān. The Qurʾān before its descent was a handful of Light, which was sent down as one compositional whole upon the heart of the Messenger ﷺ. Then when he ﷺ went to the cave of Ḥirāʾ to worship, that singular Qurʾān descended to the setting-places of the stars (*mawāqiʿ al-nujūm*), and then began to descend in accordance to events and circumstances. Now the setting-places of a star is not the star itself; for instance, the setting-place through which the moon passes is greater in measure than the moon. The setting-place corresponds to the secret code for the lunar landmass, containing what was and what will be. All of that is registered in the book of setting-places of the stars.

It is on account of this secret, moreover, that the letters of the Arabic alphabet, which come together to form words, are divided into two sorts, fourteen luminous letters (*ḥurūf nūrāniyya*), and fourteen shades of luminosity (*ẓill nurāniyya*). This adds up to twenty- eight letters, which is the number of the mansions of the moon (*al-manāzil al-*

qamariyya). The luminous letters are the oath-letters (*qawāsim*) in the Qurʾān, meaning the disconnected letters—*Alif Lām Mīm, Yāʾ Sīn, Kāf Hāʾ ʿAyn Ṣād, Nūn, Qāf*, and so on. Everything that is contained in the noble Qurʾān is summarized synoptically in these oath-letters, and everything in these oath-letters is summarized in the dot (*nuqṭa*), the reality of which is that Muḥammadan Light. The Qurʾān in the setting-places of the stars is the first descent of the Qurʾān from the presence of the Essence. By this we mean the sum total of the names and attributes; as for the sheer Essence, there is no way to perceive it. This is also called the Concealed Book (*al-kitāb al-maknūn*), as per the verse, **I swear by the setting-places of the stars; and truly it is a magnificent oath if you but knew; truly it is a noble Qurʾān, in a Concealed Book; none touch it save those who are made pure; a revelation from the Lord of the Worlds.**[188] The Concealed Book is forbidden to those who are not purified from the vision of other-than-God.

The first step in the Path of erasing these traces from the witnessing-site of the heart is the descent of the Muḥammadan star into your heart by virtue of the verse, **By the star when it sets**.[189] During its descent into your heart, it speaks to you and it points you to your relationship with your Lord and with your family, and with everything that surrounds you, and it teaches you to read the Concealed Book in the setting-places of the stars. The second descent is His words, **Nay, truly the book of the pious is in ʻIlliyūn. And what will apprise thee of ʻIlliyyun? A Book Inscribed, witnessed by those brought nigh.**[190] The third descent is alluded to in the verse, **By the Mount, and by the Book Inscribed on parchment outspread; by the house inhabited, by the canopy raised, and by the sea swilling over, truly thy Lord's punishment shall come to pass;**

naught can avert it.[191] The "Book Inscribed" is the Noble Qurʾān that is written on the pages that we hold in our hands, which is permitted to be read by both the believer and the unbeliever, the person of true faith and the heretic.

By virtue of the innermost secret of the Qurʾān's all comprehensiveness, the Qurʾān is one and is not multiple. It brings together the inscribed (*masṭūr*), the numbered (*marqūm*),[192] and the concealed (*maknūn*). There is a hadith related by Ibn Masʿūd, God be pleased with him, wherein the Prophet ﷺ said, "The Qurʾān was sent down in seven letters, and each verse has an outside and an inside, and each has a point of ascent (*maṭlaʿ*) and a boundary (*ḥadd*)."[193] Thus, the subtle commentary, or the inner Qurʾān, is this concealed book, while the inscribed book is the outward Qurʾān, and the numbered book is between the two. There is no contradiction between the three for those who are able to see through the isthmus.

As for the visible Qurʾān (*al-Qurʾān al-manẓūr*), it is the vast cosmos around you. When you come to realize the pure meaning, you find that everything in it is nothing but words. You say, "ʿAbdullāh married Fāṭima and they sired ʿAbd al-Razzāq and Idrīs," and you say, "the sky" and "the earth" and so on. These are all words, and each word has a breath that assumes a shape of the forms of existent things. Thus you are a collection of words, and we are all miniature books in which we write our past and present, and in which we will write our future. The cosmos is a great book that expresses the oneness of God. When you observe these traces, read in them the words of God, if you are a person of experiential taste. The command began with a state of rest (*sukūn*), and was set into motion through the secret of "Be!" (*kun*). So if you imagine yourself to be the author, know that you are in a state of self-admiration and distance from God.

Since we have breached the subject of the ocean of words, you should know that the first thing that was written by the Supreme Pen was the word of reverence (*taqwā*), namely *lā ilāha illā Allāh, Muḥammad rasūl Allāh.* This is the Tree whose root is firm in the ground and whose branches are in the heavens, because *lā ilāha*, "there is no god," is the annihilation (*fanāʾ*) of the heavens and the earth, and *illā Allāh*, "except God," is the Light of the heavens and the earth, which is subsistence (*baqāʾ*). The Prophet ﷺ said, "Renew your faith." He was asked, "O Messenger of God, how do we renew our faith?" He ﷺ replied, "By saying *lā ilāha illā Allāh* many times."[194] Thus, whenever the forms of created things imprint themselves upon the heart, the latter grows distant from God and darkness settles within it, and its faith is tested. Nothing causes these forms to leave the heart except the invocation of *lā ilāha illā Allāh* until faith is renewed in it. Saying *lā ilāha illā Allāh* with sincerity will make it a barrier between you and what is forbidden. What is the reality of *lā ilāha illā Allāh*? What is its trust? It is the Light of God. All you have to do is read its motions, which are the motions of the star, until you come to possess a tree whose root is firm in the earth of your heart, and whose branches are in the heaven of your spirit, and whose shade is the shade of God on the day when there shall be no shade but His. All of this by virtue of realizing your pledge of allegiance (*bayʿa*) to the Messenger of God ﷺ beneath the Tree.

Moreover, none of the letters in *lā ilāha illā Allāh Muḥammad rasūl Allāh* bear any dots. Where did the dot go? It is in the inner kernel of your heart, so look for it there. You will not find it except by the Lamp of the heart of a guide whose heart's dot has ascended above the atoms of his very being.

As for the walking Qurʾān, it is God's mercy to the worlds, Sayyidunā Muḥammad ﷺ. Our pure mother the knower of God Sayyida ʿĀʾisha, may God be pleased with her, was asked about the character of the Prophet ﷺ, and replied that his character was the Qurʾān.[195] His ﷺ speech was read according to seventy levels, corresponding to the number of the seventy veils. Each one of the Companions understood from him what the other did not. How could his ﷺ words not encompass the veils when he ﷺ is the supreme spirit (*al-rūḥ al-aʿẓam*), in the mirror of whose Light the manifestation-sites of the names are disclosed, and nowhere else? The knowers of God (*ʿārifūn*) draw upon nothing but the ocean of his Light; they are bewildered in nothing but the beauty of his manifestation; they are melted in nothing but the awe of his witnessing.

Know also that what is cheap in the Garden is precious in the herebelow, and what is precious in the herebelow is cheap in the Garden. Gold, silver, musk and amber are expensive in the herebelow, but in the Garden they are cheap, and serve as building blocks for its houses and palaces. Likewise, in the herebelow you see your lower self as being precious and dear, which is why you refuse to sell it to God. He has offered to buy it from you, and the offer stands, but you refuse to surrender it to God because of how precious it is to you. Yet in the Garden it is cheap, given what God will give to you in return for it, if you only were to sell it to Him. Contemplate what you were created for, O forgetful one!

21. Fire and Light (*Nār wa-Nūr*)

Mudhākara from the Friday
Gathering of 20th Muḥarram 1436 / 14th November 2014

Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm

My dear loved ones, we have arrived at the conclusion of our gatherings concerning the Mūsā-presence by virtue of *Hāʾ*-reading through entering into contact with the *Alif*. Of course, when we say "presence" (*ḥaḍra*), we say it figuratively, for when we speak of the Mūsā-presence we must recall and unveil all of the gnostic sciences, teachings and states that it contains. The name of a presence is not complete until its reading is completed by way of direct witnessing through all the levels of that name, and this goes for the presences of all the Prophets, upon them all the blessings and peace.

This shall be the end of our discussion of this presence, which has left in us a yearning and a love that only a wretched person could forget. This then is the final lesson, and so it is as if we are parting with it—yet it shall remain with us, dear wayfarers, because of how its pure meanings have descended into your hearts, and because of the experiential taste and understanding that it shall leave in you. For the Mūsā-presence is the presence of contact with the *Alif*, which causes the one who enters into it to ascend everlastingly and without end. This is the presence of separation and union, the presence of love and mercy, the presence of the manifestation of the opposites, the presence of exerting control (*taṣrīf*). This is the presence of casting and receiving (*ilqāʾ* and *talaqqī*), the presence of the secrets of the word. That is why it is difficult to part from it, especially for those who have tasted some of the life-breaths of the *Alif*

within it.

Consider the self-disclosure of the Real and His manifestation to Sayyidunā Mūsā, peace be upon him, in the verse of fire (*āyat al-nār*): **He saw a fire and said unto his family, "Stay here; verily I perceive a fire. Perhaps I shall bring you a brand therefrom, or find guidance at the fire**."[196] Pure meanings may only be tasted by those for whom all constructed things have vanished, and those to whom God has given a disclosure of bewilderment and garbed them in the dress of love and yearning. You find them to be enraptured in the Real through their witnessing of the glorifications of God's creation. As for those with dense natures, strong delusions and lack of taste, they halt at the outward dimension of things and see them as lifeless objects with no motion or speech. Yet do things express anything but that which settles in them? Such people forget that those things are signs from the Real to creation, that we may come to discover Him.

The enraptured gnostic converses with objects as lovers (*āshiqīn*) converse, for he witnesses the secret of God's absolute sustenance in all things. For were it not for the Real, the created existent would have no existence. The Shaykh of our Shaykhs Sayyidī Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī said, "Every atom in existence has upon it one of the names of the Object of worship." Hence the realized ones say, "Everything I ever saw, I saw God before it." Or: "Everything I ever saw, I saw God with it." Or: "Everything I ever saw, I saw God after it."

Thus the gnostic, as he dwells among created things, never fails to taste the flow of love that flows through them. To make this easier to comprehend, let us offer a simple example: What is the source of love that exists between a man and his wife? Does it not come from the Real? What about your love for your family, your children, your craving

of food or drink when you are overcome by thirst? When you directly taste the subtle graces that are hidden behind these forms, you will be bewildered by the love of the Real, until you come to understand His self-disclosures and hear the voices of all existent things as they cry out, *lā ilāha illā Allāh!*

In contrast, the one with the lowly nature does what we have described only in order to quench his bestial instincts. The one who directly tastes the glorifications of the cosmos for the Real understands the message of God, and his states are transformed from heedlessness to presence, from darkness to Light. Do you not see how God disclosed Himself to His Confidant in the form of fire? No one can deny this Qurʾānic verse. Regarding the story of Mūsā, it is said that he was a jealous man and would accompany his travelling companions at night but separate himself from them during the day, so that no one would see his wife. One dark and rainy night, he took a wrong turn because God wanted to honor him. He tried to light a fire, but it would not kindle. Then he spotted a fire in the distance to the left of the Path in the direction of Mount Ṭūr. So **he said unto his family, "Stay here; verily I perceive a fire. Perhaps I shall bring you a brand therefrom**," meaning that he would take a stick and light the end of it on fire, **or "find guidance at the fire,"** meaning someone to show him the way. So Sayyidunā Mūsā, peace be upon him, went to the fire in a state of yearning and love, hoping to attain his goal. God says: **Then when he came to it, he was called, "O Mūsā, Verily I am thy Lord. Take off thy sandals. Truly thou art in the holy valley of Ṭuwā.'"**[197] So when he approached the fire, God addressed him from it; for the One whom nothing is like unto Him does not address except through the glorifications of things. Mūsā's resolve was concentrated

solely upon attaining the fire, so God disclosed himself to him through it. Had God disclosed himself through anything other than what Mūsā was seeking, he would not have paid it any heed.

It is related in some commentaries that Sayyidunā Mūsā took some dry grass and headed towards the tree, but as he went closer to it, the fire receded, and when he stepped back the fire came closer. So he stood still in a state of bewilderment, and heard the glorification of the angels, and peaceful repose (*sakīna*) was cast upon him. Had his aspiration (*himma*) not been concentrated on the fire, he would not have gone closer to it when it withdrew, nor would it have gone closer to him when he withdrew. The fire sought him just as he sought it. And when the *sakina* was sent down upon him and he heard the call, he knew that the All-Forgiving (*al-Gaffār*) had descended to him in the form of fire, and he found intimacy when he witnessed the presence of the All-Holy. A noble hadith tells us that the Prophet ﷺ said, "God's veil is fire. If it were lifted, the rays of His face would burn everything upon which His gaze alighted."[198]

Now if we want to bring this meaning down to the ruling properties of the Path that leads to the levels of realization, we would say that when the wayfarer pledges allegiance to a lordly Shaykh, and when the sun of God's self-disclosure shines upon his heart from the carpet of his name *al-Nūr*, the Light, so that his aspiration is concentrated upon it and he turns to God with his entire being—when he does this, God discloses Himself to the seeker through His proximity. Ponder this Mūsā-wisdom: if God had addressed him through the form of Light, then Mūsā would have been afraid of it when it increased and became more intense. So God disclosed Himself to Mūsā through the sign of fire, and told him, **I am your Lord.** Why then did he have no doubt in the

divine address, and not think that it was from the devil, or from some lowly servant? Far be it for Mūsā to have doubt! I alert you to this so that you may learn the secret of the great status of God's Confidant, to whom God said: **I selected thee for Myself**.[199] This is why he welcomed the divine self-disclosure in the form of the fire. The one who saw him outwardly would have seen him approaching the fire, while the one who saw him inwardly would have seen him approaching God. This is why we say that one sign of felicity for the wayfarer on the Path of gnosis is that he welcomes the inrush of Light by honoring it, and does not leave any room for doubt to creep into his thoughts. The Real is jealous, and if you doubt in His Light, it may well leave you. Light is also a kind of veil, for another hadith tells us that the Prophet ﷺ said, "His veil is Light. Were He to lift it, the rays of His face would burn every one of His creations upon which His gaze alighted."[200]

So, dear seeker of elevation in the footsteps of Mūsā, you must come to understand God in all of His self-disclosures. You should not say, "But he was a Prophet, and one of the men of great resolve among the Messengers, may peace be upon them all. How could I be anything like him?" Rather you should know that the Prophets were sent by the Real to His creation in order that we emulate them and follow in their footsteps; and we should emulate them in their states, just as we emulate them in their words and deeds. We should follow their rulings outwardly, and drink from their oceans inwardly. At the same time, anyone who labors under the illusion that he could compare to them is deluded indeed! You should know your worth, and do not seek to go beyond your own Mount Ṭūr. The ground cannot reach the height of the stars.

As for the one who rejects the Light of the Real despite its

disclosure upon him through His All-Mercifulness, he should know that it is not him who has turned away from God. Rather, it is God who turns away from him. This lesson should suffice for those who would learn. Thus, when you see that a servant's aspiration is always to remember God and to be present at His gatherings, then know that God wants good for him. A noble hadith tells us that Ibn Masʿūd, God be pleased with him, said,

"We were with the Messenger of God ﷺ when a rider approached, dismounted and said, 'O Messenger of God, I have come to you from far away. I have worn out my mount and endured sleepless nights and thirsty days, all to ask you about two traits which have kept me awake.' The Prophet ﷺ said, 'What is your name?' He replied, 'I am Zayd al-Khayl (Zayd of the horse).' He said, 'No, you are Zayd al-Khayr (Zayd of the good)! Ask, for many a troublesome thing has been asked about.' So he said, 'I wish to ask you about the sign of God in those He desires, and His sign in those He does not desire.' The Prophet ﷺ said, 'How did you wake up this morning?' He replied, 'I woke up loving goodness and its folk and those who practice it. When I practice it, I have certainty of its compensation, and when it escapes me, I long for it.' The Messenger ﷺ said, 'This is the sign of God in those He desires, and His sign in those He desires not. If He wanted the other for you, He would have prepared you for it, and would not care in what river you drowned.'"[201]

This is why, dear seeker, you must not be heedless of witnessing the gratuitous favor while realizing your neediness of God. Strive for goodness so that you may be among its people, and avoid what is bad so that you shall be among those who are in safety. If divine bestowals come to you, witness therein the Bestower, and give your ear as a

witness. The tongues of the divine attributes of power call to you, “This is your bestowal, so do not witness anyone other than Me with it.” And the tongue of divine wisdom calls to you, “This is Our bestowal, so surrender to Us forever.” Thus, when the innermost secret of the divine attribute of power discloses itself to you, your aspiration will be concentrated upon Him, and all other-ness (*ghayriyya*) will vanish from your sight. Through these subtle graces of the Lights of Muḥammadan wisdom, you will journey unto Him. Stand at His door in a state of neediness, and enter upon Him seeking forgiveness, and prostrate to His secret by witnessing your utter poverty. Then you shall subsist through Him, serve His lordship, and give thanks for His bestowal.

Let us now return to our subject, the affair of Sayyidunā Mūsā. When he turned to Mount Ṭūr seeking to gaze upon the Beloved, God pulverized the mountain into dust, and the Confidant fell in a swoon. Mount Ṭūr stayed in its place, and so did Mūsā, while God remains hallowed beyond time and space. These are but self-disclosures that God renders through unveiling to His servants in order to draw them near to Him through His luminosity. God discloses Himself to the wayfarer: He discloses Himself to the divinely-attracted one (*majdhūb*) through total attraction, and discloses Himself to the wayfarer through wayfaring. The one to whom He discloses Himself through attraction will abandon his family and loved ones, and the one to whom he discloses Himself through love will pray through the night and be enraptured in the early hours. The stations vary according to the variety of self-disclosures. He is the One who disclosed Himself in the form of fire without any indwelling or unification, because **nothing is as His like**. He is the One who created fire, so how could He be delimited by fire? Everything that the eyes see is annihilation, while He remains, First and Last, Inward and Outward. This existence around you is nonexistent, while

to God belongs total existence. **All things upon it are perishing, and the Face of your Lord remains in Majesty and Nobility**.[202] If the disclosures of the Real were to become cut off, we would have no way to live, and we would return to nonexistence.

It is the scope of the heart that understands the symbol, just as the companions used to understand hadiths according to seventy definitions, and the Prophet ﷺ would confirm them all. It has been transmitted through tradition that he ﷺ said, "My companions are like the stars: whichever one you follow, you shall be guided."[203] The Chosen One ﷺ garbed them in his mantle, and so they became stars of guidance, adorned by the sun to radiate its Light.

Moreover, the name-disclosures of the herebelow are not like those of the hereafter. The Prophet ﷺ said in a Sacred Hadith, "I have prepared for My righteous servants that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived of."[204] This is why we say that His names cannot be numbered or reckoned, and that the revealed Law has manifested some of them so that the servant may come to assume their traits. For instance, he may assume the traits of the name *al-Karīm*, the Generous, and so become generous, and so on. The proof for the multiplicity of His most beautiful names, and that some are outward and others inward, is that he ﷺ said,

"When one of you is stricken with grief, he should say, 'I am your servant, the son of your servant, the son of your maiden. My forelock is in Your grasp; Your decree is binding upon me. I ask You by every name of Yours with which You named Yourself, or taught to any of Your creatures, or revealed in Your Book, or kept hidden in the unseen knowledge that is with You, to make the Qurʾān the spring of

my heart, and the Light of my breast, and the remedy for my sorrow, and the cure for my woes.' Anyone who says this will find that God dispels his woes and sorrows, and replaces them with joy." Someone said, "Messenger of God, shall we learn this?" He replied, "Indeed, everyone who hears it ought to learn it."[205]

So the disclosures differ, while the One who discloses Himself is One, and does not change or transform. Consider the earth, and how the dinosaurs lived upon it, while jinn and humans do today. If you were to go back in time, you would find many different forms: tents, caves, pyramids and so on. And today you see upon the face of the earth airplanes and skyscrapers. Yet, it is the same earth, and in reality there are neither pyramids nor skyscrapers, because everything upon it is perishing and passing away.

If you want to taste this, you have to free yourself from the delimitations of time and space; for divergence only exists in the forms. It is as if you placed a ringstone in a ring, and that ringstone began to move from place to place like the revolving of the earth around the sun, each rotation different from the last. 2014 is not like 2013. Likewise, the disclosures of God display themselves to you in full variety, yet the Unchanging One remains as He is, and **nothing is as His like**. As for you, O human being, you used to be idle, and now you work. You used to be a bachelor, and now you are married. You used to be young, and now you are old. How many believers have become unbelievers? How many unbelievers have become believers? So gather your aspiration in love for *Laylā*, for it is only one night in your life. When *Laylā* loves someone, she lifts her veil for him, so let his only aspiration be to see *Laylā* and engage in intimate discourse with her. Look at those who have left a mark on creation, God's folk. They left those marks through their love of

Laylā. They reserved an hour at night for intimate discourse with the Real. It is in that hour that love and yearning are made; it is in that hour that understanding and taste are acquired.

Conclusion

To conclude, when the Hidden *Alif* or the staff of Sayyidunā Mūsā appears, union discloses itself in separation, and dry land appears in the ocean. The Pharaoh of the lower self drowns in the ocean of esoteric realities, and the Mūsā of the heart is delivered. Then the Real saves the lower self through its faith so that it may serve as a lesson for others. There is, moreover, an allusion in the Samaritan for those who have intelligence. His journeying through the union of separation serves as a trial for others, for it casts the oath-violation into the calf of immanent comparability (*ʿijl al-tashbīh*)—so be careful, for there is no attainment there.

The furthest end of this Path is to ascend in degrees of incapacitation and plunge into the ocean of bewilderment. This is what we have attempted to convey to the reader in this book. For the intense manifestation of lordship necessitates veiling, since the Manifest is inseparable from the name the Nonmanifest. Gnosis is a journey through the isthmus of esoteric realities, so that the wayfarer becomes the imaginary line that bridges the separation between the *Lām* and the *Alif*.

We must also emphasize the importance of referring back to the Shaykh at each level of wayfaring in order for the disciple to attain his goal and furthest aspiration, puncture the ship of habits, slay the youth of caprice, and build the wall of the revealed Law upon the treasure of esoteric truth. In so doing, he will give lordship its rightful due, and servanthood its rightful due, and will become the root and locus of the Archetypal Book, uniting within himself that which is separated others.

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1 The original title of this book is *Al-Tarātīl al-Ḥāʾiyya fī al-āya al-Hārūniyya al-Mūsāwiyya* (The *Hāʾ*-Readings of the Hārūn and Mūsā Verses). It was published in Casablanca by Maṭbaʿat Ṣināʿat al-Kitāb, 2016. This translation was made possible through the generous support of Saif Islam, Saad Ansari, El Mehdi Amine Boutayeb, Afifa Rahman, and Tarek Ghanem.

2 Q Luqmān 31:15. The translations of Qurʾānic verses are from The Study Quran, with some modifications.

3 Q Tawba 9:119.

4 Q Zumar 39:69.

5 Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-awsaṭ*, 3319; Abū ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 2:599.

6 Q Ṭā Hā 20:96.

7 According to *The Study Quran*, the verse **a handful [of dust] from the footsteps of the messenger** (Q 20:96) refers to the tracks of dust or sand left behind by the “horse of life” (*faras al-ḥayāt*), upon which the Archangel Gabriel was riding when he was sent to take Moses to meet God at Mt. Sinai, an event witnessed by the Samaritan. The Samaritan took some of this dust and noticed that whenever this dust was placed upon something, it would become spirit, flesh, and blood; that is, it would become a living thing. (See the Qurʾān commentaries of Zamakhsharī and Qurṭubī). *The Study Quran*, p. 802.

8 Relevant passages from *The Study Quran* are worth citing for more context concerning the verse Q 20:87: **They said, “We did not fail our tryst with thee**

of our own will, but we were laden with the burden of the people's ornaments. So we cast them [into the pit], and thus did the Samaritan throw also." The Israelites' response indicates that they were tricked by the Samaritan. According to some commentators, the people's ornaments refers to the heavy jewelry lent to the Israelites by the Egyptians before the latter were destroyed, and which was therefore unlawful for the Israelites to keep. From a spiritual point of view, the burden of the people's ornaments can represent worldly riches or wealth, which becomes a kind of spiritual "burden" for people by giving them a false sense of security and immortality that weakens their sense of reliance upon God and their ultimate return to Him, as in 104:1– 3: Woe unto every slandering backbiter who amasses wealth and tallies it, supposing that his wealth makes him immortal . See also 18:7– 8c; 18:46c. Aaron told the Israelites that these ornaments were a source of religious defilement (*najas*) and thus were sinful to keep; he ordered them to throw these ornaments into a pit until Moses returned, which they all did. Alternately, some have said that it was the Samaritan who ordered them to throw the ornaments into the pit, telling them that they should wait to see what God wants to do with the ornaments. Then, without their knowledge, the Samaritan lit the pit on fire and used the now malleable ornaments to form the golden calf. *The Study Quran*, pp. 800-801.

9 This is a reference to the verse, **And the shank intertwines with the shank** (Q. 75:29). It also represents how Arabic letters join together, the middle *Lām* of the Divine Name intertwining with the letters before and after it to make an unbroken line.

10 Q Furqān 25:63-67.

11 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:560.

12 Q Jāthiya 45:23.

13 Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿjam al-awsaṭ*, 5:328.

14 Dhahabī, *Al-Kabāʾir*, 468.

15 Q Dhāriyāt 51:50.

16 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:393.

17 Q Qaṣaṣ 28:88.

18 Q Isrāʾ 17:23.

19 Q Ghāfir 40:15.

20 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:73.

21 Q Āl ʿImrān 3:31.

22 Q Baqara 2:257.

23 Q Nūr 34:34.

24 Abū Dawūd, *Sunan*, 2:791.

25 Q Aʿrāf 7:38.

26 Q Yūnus 10:65.

27 Q Zumar 39:3.

28 Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2:683.

29 Q Baqara 2:257.
30 Q Māʾida 5:67.
31 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:972.
32 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:624.
33 "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20: But store for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Matthew 6:19-20.
34 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1319.
35 Q Tawba 9:128.
36 The treasury of the *Alif* refers to the dot above the *Alif*, which the Shaykh calls the Dot-Treasure (*al-nuqṭa al-kanziyya*).
37 The Arabic word for love (*ḥubb*) begins with the letter *Ḥāʾ*.
38 When the initial *Alif* of the Name is omitted, what remains is لله, read as *liʾLlāh*.
39 Q Maryam 19:53.
40 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:733.
41 Q Aʿrāf 7:143.
42 Q Aʿrāf 7:150.
43 Q Ṭāhā 20:98.
44 Ibn Mājah, *Sunan* 1:3.
45 Composed of the letter *Bāʾ*, 'through', and the letter *Yāʾ*, 'me.'
46 Reference to the Holy Saying (*ḥadīth qudsī*) "I was a hidden treasure longing to be known, and so I created mankind, and through Me they came to know Me."
47 Aḥmad, *Musnad* 18,028; Dārimī, 2:533.
48 Q Baqara 2:67.
49 Q Raʿd 13:33.
50 Q Raʿd 13:63.
51 Q Raʿd 13:65.
52 Q Anʿām 6:103.
53 Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 19:200.
54 Q Maryam 19:53.
55 Aḥmad. *Musnad*, 7:3949.
56 Q Rūm 30:30.
57 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1:259.
58 Aḥmad, *Musnad*, 6:3901.
59 Q Shuʿarāʾ 29:63.
60 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1319.
61 Q Ṭā Hā 20:39.
62 Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿjam al-awsaṭ*, 6:221.
63 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:351.
64 Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2:889.

65 Q Naḥl 16:66.
66 Q Qāf 50:9.
67 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1067.
68 Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 1:290.
69 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 2:829.
70 Al-Rabīʿ, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Saḥīḥ: Musnad al-Imām al-Rabīʿ*, 6.
71 Q Baqara 2:30.
72 Q Baqara 2:31.
73 Q Ṭā Hā 20:38.
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77 Q Qaṣaṣ 28:88.
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79 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 2:620.
80 Q Aʿrāf 7:107.
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82 Q Baqara 2:248.
83 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1267.
84 Q Qaṣaṣ 28:9.
85 Būṣīrī, *Itḥāf al-khiyara*, 6:235.
86 Būṣīrī, *Itḥāf al-khiyara*, 1:84.
87 Q Ṭāhā, 20:5.
88 Q Āl ʿImrān 3:191.
89 Q Āl ʿImrān 3:191.
90 Bukhārī, *kitāb al-istiʾdhān*, 5786.
91 Q Fuṣṣilat 41:53.
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95 Q Ṭāhā 20:40.
96 Q Anʿām 6:122.
97 Q Anʿām 6:122.
98 Q Fāṭir 35:28.
99 Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2:794.
100 Ibn Ḥibbān, *Al-Majrūḥīn min al-muḥaddithīn*, 2:372.
101 Q Ḥadīd 57:3.
102 This verse is ascribed to the pre-Islamic poem Abū l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī.
103 Q Qamar 54:50.
104 Q Yā Sīn 36:30.
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106 Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2:673.
107 Q Ḥajj 22:5.

108 Q Anbiyāʾ 21:30.
109 Aḥmad, *Musnad*, 2:864.
110 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:223.
111 Q Ḥadīd 57:21.
112 Ḥākim, *Mustadrak*, 1:91.
113 Ṣanʿānī, *Muṣannaf*, 3:363.
114 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:73.
115 Ibid., 1:211.
116 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:680.
117 Aḥmad, *Musnad*, 12:6553.
118 Q Qaṣaṣ 28:15.
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120 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1319.
121 Q Māʾida 5:54.
122 Q Dhāriyāt 51:56.
123 Q Nūr 24:39-40.
124 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 2:824 (with "the believer is the mirror of the believer").
125 Albānī, *al-Silsila al-ṣaḥīḥa*, 3367.
126 Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm wa faḍlih*, 925.
127 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1314.
128 The words *nafs* (soul, self) and *nafas* (breath) are very closely related in Arabic.
129 Allusion to Q Ibrāhīm 14:48: **The Day the earth will be changed into other than the earth, and so too the heavens, and all shall come forth to God, the One, the Supreme**.
130 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1319.
131 The Qurʾānic phrase *mawāqiʿ al-nujūm* (Q 56:75) refers both to the positions of the stars and to the successive revelations of the Qurʾān over the course of the Prophetic era.
132 Reference to the hadith describing how during the expedition of Tabūk, the Prophet was told of a man approaching from the distance, and said, "Be Abū Dharr!," and indeed it proved to be him. Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, 2:65.
133 Q Najm 53:3-4.
134 Q ʿAlaq 96:1.
135 Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2:683.
136 Q Ibrāhīm 14:4.
137 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:325.
138 Q Fuṣṣilat 41:35.
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140 Qazwīnī, *Al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn*, 2:128.
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144 Q Qaṣaṣ 28:24.
145 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:1094.
146 Q Qaṣaṣ 28:26.
147 Q Aʿrāf 7:12.
148 Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 218.
149 The son of Shaykh al-Hibrī of Morocco.
150 Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 218.
151 Q Kahf 18:65.
152 Q Baqara 2:60.
153 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:21.
154 Q Aḥzāb 33:39.
155 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:83.
156 Q Ḥijr 15:36-38.
157 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:23.
158 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:23-24.
159 Q Āl ʿImrān 3:191.
160 Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿjam al-awsaṭ*, 6:250.
161 Q Fuṣṣilat 41:53.
162 Q Ṭāhā 20:5.
163 Q Fajr 89:22.
164 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:23.
165 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:24.
166 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:24.
167 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:25.
168 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:26.
169 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:27.
170 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:28.
171 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:28.
172 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:29.
173 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:30.
174 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:31.
175 Q Zukhruf 43:54.
176 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:32.
177 There is a play on words here between the noun *ʿaṣā* (staff) and the verb *ʿaṣā* (disobeyed).
178 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:46.
179 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:44.
180 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:46.
181 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:50.
182 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:49.
183 Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2:613.
184 Q Shuʿarāʾ 26:51.
185 Q Aʿrāf 7:143.

186 Q Ṭāhā 20:72-73.
187 Q Ṭāhā 20:72-73.
188 Q Wāqiʿa 56:75-80.
189 Q Najm 53:1.
190 Q Muṭaffifīn 83:18-21.
191 Q Ṭūr 52:1-7.
192 *Marqūm* can also mean “written” or “dotted.”
193 Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:16; Baghawī, *Sharḥ al-sunna*, 1:214; Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaghīr*, 2712.
194 Aḥmad, *Musnad*, 4:1828.
195 Aḥmad, *Musnad*, 11:5947.
196 Q Ṭāhā 20:10.
197 Q Ṭāhā 20:11-12.
198 Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-awsaṭ*, 6:139; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, 19587.
199 Q Ṭāhā 20:41.
200 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:91.
201 Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-zawāʾid*, 7:197.
202 Q Raḥmān 55:26-27
203 ʿAbd al-Barr, *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm wa faḍlih*, 925.
204 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:635.
205 Aḥmad, *Musnad*, 2:864.